AN EXAMINATION OF COHORT-BASED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE SETTINGS

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines community college-specific or consortium-sponsored programs designed to grow leadership at various levels of this type of organization and explores the effectiveness of short-term cohort-based leadership training programs from the perspective of participants.

The researcher conducted this study using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. Surveys and in-depth interviews of cohort-based leadership program graduates were conducted to gather primary data on whether they developed or enhanced leadership skills and competencies resulting from participation in the program. Specifically, this study was designed to understand (a) alumni conclusions regarding program effectiveness; (b) alumni conclusions regarding how the program components contributed to leadership skills development; (c) program execution of social and human capital development; (d) whether alums seek subsequently greater responsibility or higher positions within the organization; and (e) the benefits for participants and sponsoring institutions.

As the literature suggests for effective leadership training, cohort-based leadership development training programs deliver on both social and human capital development. While minor adjustments could target specific populations of participants and improve relevance of the curriculum to diverse leaders at all levels of the college, programs like The Leadership Academy fulfill their mission. They broaden employee perspectives and build confidence in

employee relationships, capabilities, and collaborative improvements across the representative

campuses involved.

The researcher offers the following recommendations based on the findings, analysis,

and conclusions of this study.

(a) Standardize the marketing and recruitment process across all campuses to ensure participants have a better understanding of what to expect prior to starting the program

(b) Restrict participation by any one population or campus to stimulate diversity of thought and ensure one population does not dominate cohorts

(c) Offer additional training to more targeted populations, both administrative and instructionally focused, to specifically develop role-specific leadership earlier in a participant's career.

KEY WORDS: cohort-based, leadership development, mixed-methods, community college

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family. To my wife, Kelly, thanks for the constant support, love, and confidence in my abilities. To my children, Sam, Eleanor, and Clark, for always understanding when I had to be in class or working. And to the rock-solid foundation upon which my family thrives… my mother Debbie and my mother in-law Cheri. You have always been there to support us in whatever we do… whenever its needed… whatever it takes. This endeavor was no exception.

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INTRODUCTION

Research shows that leader-follower roles are instinctual patterns in humans that arise when situations require organized group activity. Throughout recorded history leaders provided the basics for survival, but they also used their authority to resolve issues among group members and other tribes (Kaiser & Curphy, 2013). Limited mobility and rigidly defined roles within systems often caused individuals to forgo any need or desire to think for themselves. Industrialization brought about the modern workplace, which suddenly became a social construct where new skills and demands required more localized coordination of workers within organizations. Meanwhile, people in western cultures used these modern work organizations to pursue individual happiness via a steady progression in salary, a home, and a comfortable experience for their family. This often involved taking on a greater managerial role and establishing oneself as a functional leader within the hierarchical structure of an established work organization (Kets De Vries et al., 2016).

The old model of functional leaders placed by seniority into hierarchical reporting structures was commonplace in the business world and public service for most of the twentieth century. However, the information age brought change at a much more rapid pace than ever before. Businesses adopted new concepts such as globalization, and savvy public sector managers saw resulting innovations such as outsourcing, organizational flattening, and

reengineering efforts, as viable cost-cutting measures amidst budgetary constraints (Bishop, 1999).

In the years since this transition, leaders are no longer mere supervisors and taskmasters in a larger organizational chart of taskmasters. Individuals in functional work areas are being asked to do more than toil in isolation on their part of the process and then pass the activity to the next department (Bishop, 1999). Interdisciplinary teams are frequently established for each contributor to better understand their place in the long-term viability of the organization. Therefore, leaders must understand how to best communicate this augmented role to their followers. They must evolve into business analysts, motivators, and strategic planners to ensure that teams are performing appropriately and in harmony with the values and continuous improvement goals of the entire organization. Leaders are now expected to focus on the key people who make up the core of the organization and view them as assets:

> With a growing global workforce, effective working practices are created by leaders who recognize and tap into the diversity of their own and their employees' abilities and experiences. However, this requires a holistic approach to individuals. Successful leaders need to be reflective practitioners who pay attention to often hidden psychosocial dynamics that influence how people relate to and work with each other. (Kets De Vries et al., 2016)

In the modern organizational landscape, attracting, motivating, and retaining talent requires leaders, both formal and informal, to maintain a broader perspective and psycho-social skillset than ever before. According to Maxwell (2001), "The single biggest way to impact an organization is to focus on leadership development. There is almost no limit to the potential of an organization that recruits good people, raises them up as leaders and continually develops them" (p. 185).

Achieving effective organizational leadership and grooming future leaders in the name of continuous improvement has become a national obsession in the United States. Annual spending by U.S. corporations on leadership training and development surged from $7 billion in 1996 to nearly $14 billion in 2012 (Bassi et al., 2012). By 2019, that figure had risen to $17.7 billion (Freifeld, 2019). However, a study published by the Harvard Kennedy School also reported that 70% of Americans believe we have a national leadership crisis and that the country will decline if we do not get better leaders (Rosenthal, 2012).

This issue is not unique to corporations and private entities. A sense of urgency surrounding leadership development and a lack of confidence in the existing pipeline are critical concerns for community colleges as well. According to Schults (2001), "in order to gain the skills and traits important to effective leaders, those in the community college leadership pipeline must have access to appropriate professional development" (p. 4).

Prior to World War II, creating a community college leadership pipeline required intentional succession planning or the recruitment of established higher education professionals from four-year universities to transition and fill executive roles. Early community college presidents incrementally groomed these experienced professionals to become vice-presidents and other senior managers (Focht, 2010). There was also the notion that local school district superintendents made competent community college presidents, providing some early leaders for these regional institutions (Cohen et al., 2014).

In the 1950s and 1960s, post-war America saw increasing higher education enrollments and a significant expansion of the community college system which created a burgeoning need for community college leaders. Formal community college leadership development programs

began with the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958, which provided significant fellowship funding for full-time study and reflected a national commitment to well-trained community college administrators (Katsinas & Kempner, 2005). In 1960, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation announced a series of grants to establish university training for two-year college leaders. In all, 12 universities established community college leadership programs because of this initiative through which hundreds of deans and presidents have graduated (AACC, 2012). Federal Title III funding also established the Education Professional Development Act of 1968, which, like the NDEA fellowships, helped to cultivate competent community college administrators (Katsinas & Kempner, 2005). With the emerging prominence of America's community colleges, both philanthropic organizations and the federal government recognized the need to develop community college leadership.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to a nationwide survey by the Compensation and Benefits of Community College CEOs in partnership with the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), 75% of the 370 surveyed community college presidents and CEOs plan to retire by 2022, with an additional 15% more planning to retire by 2027 (Tekle, 2012). Institutions also expect to lose a large number of senior administrators and faculty members in the process, creating an even more massive vacuum to fill and causing the potential for severe instability (American Association of Community Colleges, 2013). Thus, CEO and presidential candidates already possessing the skills community colleges require will become increasingly difficult to find. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), there were 146 first-

time presidents hired between May 1, 2012, and April 15, 2013, with most not having experience in essential areas of budgeting, academic management, and fundraising.

Prepared and competent leaders from all ranks in the community college are essential because just like their corporate counterparts, they are often tasked with articulating the mission and vision of the organization and its various departments. They must develop innovative strategies and activities to achieve changing organizational goals and motivate personnel to carry out plans for improvement. These leaders are called upon to collaborate with key stakeholders and affiliated institutions to determine how to best use institutional resources, creating courses and programs to meet the wide-ranging needs of the community, such as affordable workforce training and accessible higher education. A pool of capable leaders cultivated from all ranks of the community college evolves into a pipeline of prepared administrators ready for president or CEO roles in the future.

With 89% of college presidents holding a doctorate, attainment of advanced degrees is inherently valued, and many employees with executive aspirations seek graduate programs in community college leadership to build their skillset (American Council on Education, 2017). According to the Council for the Study of Community Colleges (n.d.), there are 63 degrees and six non-degree graduate programs in the field of community colleges, including courses about community colleges as part of broader programs (i.e., Higher Education, Educational Leadership). Most community college leadership degrees are a doctorate in education or Ed.D. These programs typically require 60 to 66 credits, a time commitment of three to five years, and have a final price tag between $21,000 and $55,000 (Franklin University, n.d.).

The coursework is a significant barrier for many with leadership aspirations, as the dissertation research and capstone projects are often too much additional responsibility beyond existing commitments. Also, while some community colleges provide tuition reimbursement programs to employees, this is neither widespread nor consistent across institutions. Larger organizations often need more leaders to address institutional needs but may not have the financial resources available to help existing employees grow via a graduate program. Thus, more short-term, non-academic credit options for cohort-based leadership development programs have been developed as an additional avenue to meet the growing leadership demand. Short-term models serve both as a chance for participants to gain perspective and as a marketing tool to promote the mission, purpose, and personal benefits of assuming additional responsibility at the college. Both formal graduate programs and short-term leadership development initiatives are necessary to give employees a broader operational viewpoint of their respective community college and meet the projected sizeable demand for community college leaders.

THE CHALLENGE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

Today's community college leaders are tasked with looking far beyond their campus and local community to have a prepared response for many complex external environmental factors. A leader's ability to appropriately maintain perspective in an ever-changing operational environment is crucial. For example, current trends like reductions in federal, state, and local funding for higher education have pressed community colleges to seek out higher levels of productivity and efficiency, especially during economic downturns and resulting enrollment increases (Cohen et al., 2014). In response, many community colleges have adapted their

business model to identify new revenue sources, develop and nurture college foundations to raise private funding, and reduce spending. Contract testing, training, and developmental education offerings have potential to capitalize on current campus resources and provide utility to the community. Others have marketed existing psychological counseling, printing services or facilities rental on campus to generate revenue.

An entrepreneurial approach requires collaborations with other community colleges, workforce development boards, and private organizations while expanding existing relationships (Garmon, 2001). It requires skilled leadership with business acumen to offer these services into the marketplace competitively yet remain true to the college mission of serving students and the community, as municipalities, private organizations, and school districts all could benefit from such services.

As local and low-cost higher education options, the that role community colleges and their leadership play in serving underrepresented and underserved populations is a unique challenge compared to their university counterparts. For example, a disproportionate number of low income, immigrant, first generation, and ethnic minority students attend community colleges compared to other institutions of higher education (Bailey et al., 2015). In 2016, 56% of all Hispanic undergraduates attended community colleges, while the comparable figure for Black undergraduates was 44% (Ma & Baum, 2016). Also, community college students often struggle with required courses, tutoring, and other educational activities in addition to personal schedules containing family obligations, work commitments, child rearing, long commutes, or other obligations (Cohen et al., 2014).

While the founding leaders of the Community College movement were pioneers and builders, today's leaders operate in a more complex world. Resources are constrained, accountability requirements are increasing, labor relations are more contentious, and society is more litigious than ever before. Students expect community colleges to offer more learning opportunities and services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Distance learning technologies are erasing geographical boundaries, and competition for students is increasing. College leaders are expected to respond ever more quickly to meet emerging community and national needs such as a shortage of health care workers and teachers and to prepare students to live in an increasingly global society and economy (Boggs, 2011).

The complex challenges that community college leaders face today require significant growth in a wide range of competencies. Eddy (2010) asserted that there is no one way to lead, but rather a multidimensional approach comprised of leader cognition, race and gender, the importance of culture and individual pathways to leadership positions, and the need for more collaborative modes of communication and decision making. Thus, leadership development training opportunities, both long and short term, must be accessible for current and aspiring community college leaders to properly serve their respective communities in the foreseeable future.

OVERVIEW TO THE STUDY

The short-term "grow-your-own" leadership development programs offered in the community college sector are typically built around brief seminars, lasting only a few days, and cohort-based models, which usually last between eight to 12 months (Cota, 2006). Cohort models usually incorporate workshops along with application-based projects that require

extensive collaboration among participants from varying functional levels and departments. A successful cohort creates a learning environment where all participants experience a sense of belonging, understand their collective purpose, and actively engage in group projects that promote interdependence and interaction (Barnett et al., 2000). Such a cohort offers a more vibrant presentation of leadership concepts and a more memorable experience for the selected participants of this study to recall in an interview.

This programmatic approach to development was a result of the "Leading Forward" summit conducted by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to address the impending shortage of community college leaders (Shults, 2001). Models using the programmatic approach are often more localized within individual community college campuses or statewide systems to provide employees with strong networks for problem-solving and professional development within their current roles. Cohorts intentionally connect participants to help them achieve greater overall leadership capacity than if they remained focused on their own experiences or institution. The group approach also helps mitigate attrition and absenteeism by fostering an increased expectation of peer accountability and support.

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the League for Innovation in the Community College, along with larger community college districts, sponsor their own short-term training programs (Cohen et al., 2014). For example, the North Texas Community College Consortium and the Michigan Community College Association sponsor cohort-based leadership training models with participants selected from multiple campuses around the state. Alternatively, programs like the Harper Leadership Institute (Harper College, Palatine, Illinois) welcome talented individuals from varying departments within the same campus community.

In both instances, the intent is to facilitate collaboration and topical discussions to foster

growth and strategic initiatives surrounding issues facing each campus community. The training

topics vary based on the identified need of the sponsoring organization, although they tend to

center around specific executive administrative tasks and case studies. Larger campuses and

private organizations can more frequently justify the significant cost of running such programs

compared to smaller schools. Despite increased fiscal constraints, the prevailing assumption is

that providing these professional development opportunities to prepare future leaders is a

worthwhile expense (Grady, 2015). However, little research has been conducted on the

effectiveness of community college leadership training programs. Participant satisfaction, as

opposed to learning outcomes or promotions, has been the typical measure of effectiveness

(Cota, 2006; Reille & Kezar, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the effectiveness of short-term cohort-based

leadership training programs from the perspective of participants. While many leadership

studies focus on senior managers and executive level leadership, this study examines

community college-specific, or consortium sponsored programs designed to grow leadership at

various levels of the organization. For consistency, the scope of this research is narrowed to

community college, regional or state-sponsored programs as opposed to those sponsored by

national organizations, like the League for Innovation in the Community College or the AACC.

Surveys and in-depth interviews of cohort-based leadership program graduates were

conducted to gather primary data on whether they developed or experienced enhanced

leadership skills and competencies as a result of participation in the program. Specifically, this

study is designed to understand: (a) alumni conclusions regarding program effectiveness; (b) alumni conclusions regarding how the program components contributed to leadership skills development; (c) program execution of social and human capital development; (d) the extent to which alums sought subsequently greater responsibility or higher positions within the organization; and (e) the benefit analysis for participants and sponsoring institutions.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this investigation:

- How did participation in the cohort-based leadership training program contribute to skill development?

- How did specific program components contribute to participants' growth as leaders?

- What retention or promotional gains have occurred after participating?

- What are the benefits of the program?

Significance of the Study

A better understanding of the participant experience and related outcomes of cohort-based leadership development programs will help to determine if such programs are worth the investment. The leadership gap, created by retiring presidents and CEOs, coupled with senior administrators simultaneously assuming the executive ranks puts pressure on institutions to fill the vacuum by cultivating existing talent into competent leaders. This research is designed to provide valuable feedback regarding this training model and the competency gaps identified at all levels of the organization, thus assisting community colleges with programmatic changes and curriculum design as they work to develop a timely leadership pipeline.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

- *Cohort*: a group of people who have shared a particular event or experience

- *Community College*: A two-year college established to serve a specific bounded community offering an Associate degree as its highest credential

- *Human Capital*: the skills, knowledge, and experience possessed by an individual or viewed in terms of their value or cost to an organization

- *Leader Development:* an enhancement of knowledge and expertise that expands an individual's capacity for leadership potential

- *Leadership Development*: a program or activity that enhances a participant's ability to effectively perform in leadership roles within an organization

- *Leadership Pipeline*: A structure that is designed to provide organizational members the opportunity to develop or enhance key competencies with the intent to assume leadership roles or responsibilities in the future

- *Social Capital*: the networks of relationships among people who work in a particular organization enabling that organization to function effectively.

SUMMARY

Leadership structures help people and organizations overcome challenges, complete complex tasks, and resolve issues. There is no one way to lead in our modern society, what is required is a multidimensional approach comprised of leader cognition, cultural competency, and collaborative modes of communication and decision making. This is especially true in America's community colleges, as these institutions face challenges including reductions in funding; the ever-changing needs of a diverse student body; and the large number of presidents, senior administrators, and faculty members due to retire in the coming years. Thus, leadership development training opportunities must be accessible for current and aspiring community college leaders to properly serve their institutions in the foreseeable future.

This study explores the effectiveness of cohort-based leadership training programs from the perspective of participants to determine if such programs are worth the investment for participants and institutions. Findings from this research will provide valuable feedback regarding this training model to assist community colleges with programmatic changes as they work to develop a timely leadership pipeline.

This document is organized into five chapters. Chapter One contains the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, the significance of the study, definition of key terms, and the study's organization. Chapter Two consists of a review of the literature related to leadership development programs; the concept of developing human capital versus social capital as it pertains to an organization; the leadership competencies prescribed by the American Association of Community Colleges; the concept of teaching leadership development; cohort-based training models; and training program evaluations. Chapter Three describes the methodology of the study, and includes detailed descriptions for the research method, rationale for approach, sample selection, data collection methods, data analysis, reliability, ethics, and study limitations. Chapter Four contains the study findings and an analysis of the data in relation to the research questions. Chapter Five focuses on conclusions and future research recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This literature review will investigate the current scholarly body of knowledge

surrounding the problem and the research questions of this study. The review consists of a

comprehensive examination of the literature on leadership development practices and

succession planning, human capital versus social capital, AACC Leadership Competencies,

teaching leadership development, and cohort-based training models.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

It is not difficult to understand why people gravitate toward leadership roles. The status

and advantages often provided to those who can lead effectively are very attractive motivators.

Associated with personal ambition, being a leader is traditionally viewed as an individual

pursuit. For example, transformational leadership theory proposes that practitioners engage in

behaviors related to the leadership dimensions of individualized consideration, intellectual

stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence (Bass et al., 2008). While

inherently oriented toward social skill, this theory still assumes a very individualistic

conceptualization of leader development. Within this construct, individuals are trained

primarily on their personal approach to intrapersonal skills and their own functional abilities

within the organization (Kelloway & Barling, 2010; Neck & Manz, 2010; Skarlicki & Latham,

2005).

This training of the individual leader often preserves the cultural dynamic of an organization and minimizes loss of specific institutional knowledge in the event of a critical separation or retirement. However, leader development training must also consider the more complex social interactions between the designated leader and the organizational environment (Fiedler, 1996). In organizations of varying sizes and complexity, most leaders do not lead in isolation (O'Reilly et al., 2010). By contrast an approach that emphasizes the social process of leadership provides a more complementary perspective by engaging working members of the professional community (Barker, 2001; Drath et al., 2008; Wenger & Snyder, 2000). This perspective is shared by situational leadership theory developed by Blanchard and Hersey (1996) when addressing how leaders must vary their leadership approach based on the needs of the employee and the situation; and character-based leadership, an extension of transformational leadership, focusing on individual morality (Hannah et al., 2010) and virtues as they attempt to relate to others (Sosik et al., 2010). In this way, each person contributes, and leadership is an effect rather than a cause (Drath, 2001). Leadership is, therefore, an emergent property of effective systems design (Salancik et al., 1975) and leadership development consists of using social or relational systems to help build commitments among members of a community of practice (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). This requires individuals to be introduced and appropriately engaged over time as a part of a more substantial organizational enhancement and succession plan to not only learn the essence of social skills but also understand how to navigate complex social interactions and lead effectively.

Despite the additional time and resources required to execute appropriate leadership development, many organizations are evolving significantly with regard to employee

development programs. Shallow talent pools make employee development more attractive to organizations than replacement, especially when high-potential employees possess underdeveloped interpersonal skills. Promoting too quickly pays credence to achievements rather than emotional maturity. Executives may be enamored with intelligence and passion, whereas peers and subordinates are more likely to see a socially underprepared leader as arrogant, lacking empathy or aloof (Bunker et al., 2002).

Without effective instruments of succession planning in place, employees with significant potential are denied the opportunity to develop critical emotional competencies in addition to intellectual and operational skills through interactive organization specific experiences or scenarios. Good examples of needed competencies include the ability to negotiate with peers; regulate ones' emotions in times of crisis; or win support for change. Thus, it is essential that both individual (human capital) and relational lenses (social capital) are considered when developing leadership development programs.

HUMAN CAPITAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

As discussed earlier in this chapter, leader development practices were historically designed to develop individual skills and competencies, thus contributing to, and protecting, an organizations' human capital (Day & Harrison, 2007; Lepak & Snell, 1999). One standard approach begins by asking senior managers to identify competencies needed in various leadership roles of the organization. This creates an issue, as research to date has shown that most people in positions of authority are ineffective leaders themselves (Hughes et al., 2012). Such individuals may have opinions on how to structure leadership development activities, but they will likely not align with organizational goals or amount to authentic best practices;

whereas a focus on relational skills aligns with leadership development and emphasizes the

creation of social capital (Day & Harrison, 2007). Day (2000) proposed a distinction between

leader and leadership development:

> At the core of the difference is an orientation toward developing human capital (leader development) as compared with social capital (leadership development) (p. 605).
> In building the leadership capacity necessary to continually reinvent organizations and effectively respond to an ever-changing external environment, those charged with the task will "need to attend to both individual leader and collective leadership development" (p. 583).

Table 1: Leader Development Compared to Leadership Development

COMPARISON DIMENSION	DEVELOPMENT TARGET	
	LEADER	LEADERSHIP
Capital Type	Human	Social
Leadership Model	• Individual • Personal Power • Knowledge • Trustworthiness	• Relational • Commitments • Mutual Respect • Trust
Competence Base	Intrapersonal	Interpersonal
Skills	• Self-Awareness • Emotional Awareness • Self Confidence Accurate Self-Image Self-Regulation • Self-Control • Trustworthiness • Personal Responsibility • Adaptability • Self-Motivation • Initiative • Commitment • Optimism	• Social Awareness • Empathy • Service Orientation • Political Awareness • Social Skills • Building Bonds • Team Orientation • Change Catalyst • Conflict Management

(Source: Day, 2000)

Human capital augmentation focuses on developing individual knowledge, skills, and

abilities (intrapersonal capacities). Social capital places emphasis on building networked

relationships among individuals that enhance cooperation and resource exchange in creating

organizational value (interpersonal capacities) (Day, 2000).

Social interaction within an organization is associated with increased access to others

for information, expertise, resources, and cooperation (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Hansen, 2002).

According to Day (2000):

> An important goal of networking initiatives is to develop leaders beyond merely
> knowing what and knowing how, to knowing who in terms of problem-solving
> resources. Networking is also about expanding one's definition of what and how
> through exposure to others' thinking, which can challenge underlying assumptions
> about what we think we know. It is also a means of encouraging organization members
> to form commitments with others outside of their immediate work group. In this way,
> networking is about investing in and developing social capital with a primary
> developmental emphasis on building support. (p. 596)

Social capital created by employees becomes the social capital of organizations. In an

organization that provides services, like community colleges, there are people valued for their

ability to deliver exceptional service and a quality product. Thus, networks that transcend the

organization's formal structure are the most beneficial to an organization which strives for

continuous improvement and growth. In a show of employee empowerment, organizations

need to specifically ensure collaboration both internally (within and across departments) and

externally (across disciplines and institutions) to ensure the livelihood of each network type.

Employees must feel supported and encouraged in this regard, which supports the argument

for cohort-based leadership development training since complex projects and cross-functional

collaboration may need stronger forms of social capital than can come from traditional 'meet

and greet' handshake events (Burt, 1992; Hansen, 2002). According to Burt (1992):

> Within an acceptable range of needed capabilities, there are many people with
> comparable financial and human capital. Whatever you bring to a production task, other
> people could do the same job; perhaps not as well, but acceptable by the basic

standards set by the organization. Additional criteria other than financial and human capital are used to narrow the pool down to the individual who is given the opportunity. Those other criteria are social capital. (p. 59)

How a person is connected in the social structure has a direct correlation to the resources and opportunities available to provide value within the organization and the external environment. This capacity for community college advocacy is exactly the kind of skill required of community college leaders as defined by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and will be discussed later in this chapter. Duree (2007) found that 75% of community college presidents identified networking with coworkers as very important. More specifically, 54% rated social networks as important or very important, and 52% rated business networks as important or very important. Hence, effective community college leaders must network within their college, but must also reach beyond the boundaries of their campus to forge relations with the community. For example, presidents represent the community college in the locality served, in the broader context of higher education and at various levels of government functions (Hassan et al., 2010). Thus, the overall goal is to enhance the two separate elements for personal gain, organizational value, and effective leadership:

- an inward element to the leader's personality and values (i.e., human capital)

- an outward element to the institutional environment (i.e., social capital) (Day 2000; Duree, 2007; Hassan et al., 2010)

AACC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) recognized the need to establish a more systemic leadership pipeline and partnered with various groups in 2003 to create the Leading Forward project.

Experts from affiliated councils, college, and state 'grow-your-own' leadership programs

and university programs were convened. The two-year AACC initiative, which was supported by

a $1.9 million planning grant by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, was intended to help community

colleges cultivate a new generation of leaders. This initiative supported the planning stages of a

leadership development framework to address the growing leader gap but also helped colleges

identify leadership competencies most important in the contemporary community college

(AACC, 2003).

As a result of the Leading Forward project, the AACC Board of Directors unanimously

approved the *Competencies for Community College Leaders* document and encouraged current

leaders, boards of trustees, and leadership development programmers to use this document to

guide their practices. The competency framework was based on the following principles:

1. Leadership can be learned.

2. Many members of the community college community can lead.

3. Effective leadership is a combination of effective management and vision.

4. Learning leadership is a lifelong process.

5. The leadership gap can be addressed through a variety of strategies such as college grow-your-own programs, AACC council and university programs, state system programs, residential institutes, coaching, mentoring, online, and blended approaches. (AACC, 2005, p. 2)

In 2005, the AACC published the first leadership competencies intending for the list to

be a "living document" that evolves over time to meet the changing needs of community

colleges (AACC, 2005). The most recent update (2018) introduced new role-specific

competencies for formal leaders such as faculty coordinators, mid-level managers and CEOs.

The previous update (2013) provided holistic guidance for emerging leaders at any level within

the community college. The AACC leadership competencies have been utilized for a variety of

purposes nationally, with positive results overall. The AACC initiative includes identification of

the top challenges facing community colleges and also addressed hiring practices and

approaches to employee evaluations for the purposes of continuous improvement and long-

term needs of the college (Duree, 2007). In this study the older more broad-spectrum emerging

leadership competency structure (2013) was utilized, as it would have been considered the

standard by which participants were measured at the time they attended cohort-based

leadership development programs.

Table 2: AACC Leadership Competencies for Emerging Leaders

COMPETENCY	DEFINITION FOR EMERGING LEADERS - 2013
Organizational Strategy	• Understand the mission, vision, and goals of community colleges, and how your role supports them. • Learn the culture of the institution to effectively perform your duties successfully within the cultural constructs/framework that exists. • Have a forward-looking philosophy and be prepared for change. • Know your institution's strategies for improving student success and completion. • Provide exemplary customer service that makes members of the community feel welcome. • Have an ongoing focus on process improvement for internal and external customers. • Understand the organizational structure of the community college and the function that your unit plays in achieving institutional goals. • Understand the responsibilities of all employees within the organization.
Institutional Finance, Research, Fundraising, and Resource Management	• Know your unit's budget. • Institutional fundraising is everyone's job. • Learn the skills of effective fundraising. • Understand the institutional dashboard and how to interpret data to improve the student academic experience within your unit of the institution.

COMPETENCY	DEFINITION FOR EMERGING LEADERS - 2013
	• Understand the importance of time management and planning in your position. • Understand the organizational protocol: if you are unable to resolve a conflict, understand how to have it addressed.
Communication	• Be articulate. Work on having strong presentation skills. • Always have a succinct pocket speech that is consistent with the mission, vision, and priorities of the institution. • Know the chain of command for communications. • Be willing to offer a realistic solution to any institutional problem. • Learn the nuances of communications with various internal and external stakeholders. • Become familiar with what it means to be globally competent. • Be familiar with grassroots efforts to organize stakeholders to advocate for the community college mission.
Collaboration	• Know the key stakeholders that are advocates for the institution, and the roles that they play in the community. • Understand that there are no lone rangers.
Community College Advocacy	• Recognize there is an interplay of public perception and policymaking that can impact college operations. • Recognize there are multiple government programs at the state and federal levels that contribute to the funding of a college's students and programs.

(Source: AACC, 2013)

Extensive research of sitting presidents, board of trustee members and executive level leaders indicates a clear and convincing case that the AACC leadership competencies appropriately describe the skills needed for effective leadership (Duree, 2007; Eddy, 2010; Hassan et al., 2010; McNair et al., 2011). However, it may not be realistic to expect one person (i.e., the college president) to excel in all of the competencies. According to Hickman (2010), "Movement toward shared power or empowerment is a logical course of action as organizations place greater reliance on the collective or collaborative capabilities of their members to innovate and respond in turbulent or dynamic environments" (p. 513).

Given that practitioners recognize the importance of the AACC competencies and that there seems to be a need for additional preparation of all employees in relation to the competencies, stronger connections between professional development activities and the competencies are of great benefit to help bridge the leadership gap (Eddy, 2010). Thus, if community college professional development programs were designed using the AACC competencies, potential participants could more easily identify which programs best meet their needs.

A research study by Hassan et al. (2010) was able to better define the types of developmental experiences that would develop each AACC competency.

Table 3: Top Three Developmental Experiences Related to the Building AACC Leadership Competencies

AACC COMPETENCY	TOP THREE DEVELOPMENTAL EXPERIENCES
Organizational Strategy	• Progressive Job Responsibilities • Challenging Job Assignments • Graduate Degree Programs
Resource Management	• Progressive Job Responsibilities • Challenging Job Assignments • Networking with Colleagues
Communication	• Feedback • Challenging Job Assignments • Hardships
Collaboration	• Progressive Job Responsibilities • Challenging Job Assignments • Feedback
Community College Advocacy	• Networking with Colleagues • Mentoring / Coaching • Sponsored Workshops

(Source: Hassan et al., 2010)

It is significant that the competency rated highest in importance by presidents and

trustees in this research study, Community College Advocacy, was developed by the fewest

number of experiences. This suggests that some general leadership development experiences

may not directly contribute to a specific skill set and may need to be targeted for development

(Hassan et al., 2010). The proliferation of community college leadership institutes and other

cohort-based training models are a direct response to this need.

A self-assessment of one's skills using the AACC competencies, followed by an analysis

of the learning outcomes of professional development programs, could help optimize the

match between the program, the needs of the college and the goals of aspiring leaders.

However, it is difficult to prescribe a specific set of activities that will meet all the needs of

aspiring leaders, since the journey is a very personal one. McNair et al. (2011) state:

> A unifying framework, such as the AACC competencies, can help ensure that, regardless
> of the path followed and activities undertaken, aspiring leaders can be confident that
> they will gain the skills needed for successful leadership. (p. 18)

TEACHING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND THE WILLINGNESS TO LEARN

Research by Kouzes and Posner (2012) concluded that leadership could be learned

through instruction and practice since there is an observable pattern of behaviors. Additional

research supports this, stating that an individual's leadership performance and capacity as a

leader can be augmented through formal development programs (Bolton, 1991; Earnest, 1996;

Rohs, 1999). Yet many claim that enhancing leadership abilities through instruction, expert

opinions, and case studies is a flawed approach because real growth in leadership requires a

more first-hand experiential framework (Rowland, 2016). According to Allio (2005),

They teach participants about leadership, presenting historical perspectives on leadership theory, new paradigms, and lists of leadership virtues. They give the aspiring leaders a cognitive experience. But do they teach them how to lead? (p. 1072)

In corporations, executives often approach these programs with power-oriented mindsets and effectiveness metrics that are not relevant to organizational goals. Only with shared accountability with other team members and programs built on strategic goals and proper metrics, do training outcomes become significantly more relevant (Ready & Conger, 2003). Relative to the community college sector, the AACC has been a staunch supporter of leadership education balanced with theoretical and experiential components. The American Academy of Community Colleges (2012) states that

While it can be enhanced immeasurably by natural aptitude and experience, supporting leaders with exposure to theory, concepts, cases, guided experiences, and other practical information and learning methodologies is essential. (p. 5)

At present, there are four professional leadership development options to cultivate future community college leaders: (a) university-based educational programs (Ed.D., Ph.D.); (b) short-term conferences, workshops, and institutes; (c) internal succession planning 'grow-your-own' (GYO) programs; and (d) informal and lifelong learning strategies to improve performance, such as professional reading, personal reflection, writing for publications or professional organizations (Cloud, 2010; Ebbers et al., 2010; Hassan et al., 2010; McNair et al., 2011; Piland & Wolf, 2003; Reille & Kezar, 2010; Shults, 2001). Cohort-based leadership training models fit the 'institutes' label found in the second category and are the focus of this study.

A research study by Hull and Keim (2007) found that awareness of these training programs was high among community college employees, but participation was low. Yet,

community college presidents have actively endorsed participation in one (or more) of these programs for active professional development (McNair et al., 2011). Suggestions to increase participation include lowering the cost, modifying the content, and creating more local opportunities to minimize travel expenses (Hull & Keim, 2007). This study focuses on such statewide, regional, or institution-specific leadership development training.

Other barriers to participation are often learner specific. Andragogy, an adult learning theory that is learner-focused, rather than teacher-focused, provides a critical set of assumptions for designing the instructional environment to support self-directed learning (Taylor & Kroth, 2009). These assumptions include (1) the adult learner's self-concept supporting self-direction in learning; (2) the concept of the learner's active involvement in planning learning; (3) the role of the learner's experience; (4) the readiness to learn; (5) the orientation to learning; and (6) the motivation to learn (Knowles, 1984; Taylor & Kroth, 2009). It is possible that potential participants have preconceived notions of how homogenized group trainings could be, when in reality these leadership development programs emphasize the learner's unique experience and are executed based on the theory of andragogy.

Also, exploring one's emotions and behavioral patterns is stressful. Change is difficult and changing oneself is often the most challenging task a person must handle in their career. Participants in leadership development training are often caught off guard by the need to engage oneself as an object of study. People may come from organizations where they might be expected to keep their thoughts and concerns to themselves and suppress any expressions of their feelings. Having to openly discuss them may not be in line with the set of expectations

they have developed through years of professional and life experience. However strange, this process is conducive to innovation (Kets De Vries et al., 2016).

There are three types of boundaries that participants need to learn to master in this integral learning process: temporal, spatial, and psychological. Temporal boundaries make sure there are no interruptions from the outside world into the time allotted for the program. That means not only clearing the time away from one's office, but also having enough time for pre-course work, including reading, contemplating, and analyzing one's thoughts and feelings. Spatial boundaries are about geographical separation of the program from the rest of the world. Protection of the learning space from work and home could include strict rules on using mobile phones, timely arrival from breaks and the presence of dedicated workspace dedicated to experimentation and change. Participants also must manage what they communicate to their work colleagues, family, and friends regarding the experiments that they are conducting in the program. Finally, psychological boundaries deal with what is safe to express, question or demand during the program. Managing the boundaries, in this case, means finding ways to ease one's anxiety and develop trust in the people (both participants and faculty) involved in the program. It involves an understanding of how broadly or deeply they want to involve others in their personal process of transformation (Kets De Vries et al., 2016).

A willingness to be vulnerable and committed to an unknown process in such a way could have an impact on participation. It is up to the sponsoring organization to provide a safe and encouraging environment for employees to feel comfortable volunteering for this type of engagement. Ideally, work experience, goals, and capacity for mastering the three boundaries are assessed via the process of application or interviewing, which gives the candidate a preview

of the program he or she is applying for. An in-depth acceptance process also allows

administrators to assess whether the candidate will be able to handle the demands of the

program and whether he or she will fit with the group of participants.

COHORT-BASED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODELS

Leadership development programs are designed to give current and future leaders the

tools necessary to make appropriate workplace decisions. Participating employees often feel a

sense of balance and completeness if their human need for exploration and learning is met.

Self-assertion as a leader in the workplace can produce a sense of self-efficacy and competency

while instilling a sense of initiative and creativity. Empirical studies have found significant

positive effects on motivation, wellbeing and performance in work environments that

encourage this form of development (Kets De Vries et al., 2016). Kets De Vries et al. go on to

assert that "Organizations may make grandiose statements about being great places to work,

but the challenge is to make these statements a reality" (2016, p. 256).

Day (2000) described these development programs as interventions for leadership

competencies, targeting topics such as feedback, networking with colleagues,

mentoring/coaching, and action learning, defined as progressive job responsibilities,

challenging job assignments, personal reflection/journaling, and hardships. For example, many

community colleges now plan more topical action learning assignments geared toward the less-

developed leadership competencies of funding, governance, workforce development, and

legislative advocacy due to the complex demands of modern higher education (Duree, 2007).

The inclusion of cohort-based leadership development programs illustrates a shift in

development practices for high-potential employees as previous studies of successful

executives have shown that classroom-based training programs contribute little to leaders'

development (Davies & Easterby-Smith, 1984; McCall et al., 1988). This is due to the traditional

"one-size-fits-all" approach to a standardized leadership development program that can be

problematic when attempting to meet the needs of leaders with differing backgrounds,

experiences, and skill levels. Solansky (2010) recommends that

> leadership training programs should be realistic, practical, provide an opportunity for
> growth, and should provide new knowledge to participants all while facing the reality
> that people come into the program with diverse skills, learning styles, and experiences.
> (p. 675)

Cappelli (2008) suggests that structured development programs are a way to adapt to

the uncertainty in talent demand by bringing "employees from all the functions together in an

18-month course that teaches general management skills, and then sends them back to their

functions to specialize" (p. 4). Leadership development programs have become a means by

which "high potential managers demonstrate their talents through organization-wide forums"

in addition to providing opportunities to "showcase action learning projects for top

management team members" (Groves, 2007, p. 244).

In many programs, participants are pulled away from their day-to-day work activities,

brought into training as a cohort, and provided a curriculum that has been selected by the

organization. Individual development strategies, expert perspectives, and case studies are used

to guide the participant's understanding of specific circumstances and decisions leaders often

face. This practice allows participants to discuss the issues of the day via an assimilation

experience with potential and established leaders, which leads to semi-strong social capital as

their contact network grows. Incorporated events or "off-sites" allow the development

experience also to serve as an efficient way to facilitate a contact experience with other participants, guest lecturers, and key administrators to further build social capital. Finally, the addition of job assignments and action learning projects has the potential to efficiently support establishing strong forms of social capital (Bilhuber Galli & Müller-Stewens, 2012). Since these programs are typically available to various departments of the organization, this structure has the greatest likelihood of creating ties within and across community colleges in all the identified leadership network types: peer, organizational, field policy, and collective.

A cohort structure offers program participants the opportunity to "interact with the materials and therefore internalize and globalize the information" (Lewis, et al., 2010, p. 4). Cohort members also collaborate on tasks and assignments over time, which could cultivate a positive peer relationship consisting of familial emotional ties, team views and shared responsibilities (Seed, 2008). Lei and colleagues (2011) report that the familiarity among cohort members allows for an authentic conversation about issues, concerns, and projects in the program compared to non-cohort members. Studies have supported the observation that the power inherent in a cohort model provides mutual support and protection (Basom & Yerkers, 2001; Lewis et al., 2010; Potthoff et al., 2001). In such shared learning communities, students form a bond to pursue objectives by sharing personal stories and related experiences. They keep one another abreast of important information and encourage individuals to stay in the program. As in a family, the cohort members are resources that support one another.

While widely considered a powerful training tool, cohort-based training models can have some serious drawbacks if program coordinators and facilitators are not sufficiently prepared to handle issues when they arise. Studies show that the cohort group can have a

power and potential to alter policy of cohort models because of disruptive behaviors like the

members of a dysfunctional family (Lewis et al., 2010; McCarthy et al., 2005; Seed, 2008). For

example, group members may create competition instead of teamwork, or resentment instead

of cohesion and trust (Lei et al., 2011). In their study, McPhail et al. (2008) noticed some factors

that detract from cohesion such as "dominant group members, traditional instructional

modalities, and inadequate facilities negatively impacted perceptions of the cohort experience"

(p. 362). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is up to the sponsoring organization to provide

a safe and encouraging environment for participants.

COHORT-BASED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Implementing short term cohort-based leadership development programs has become a

popular practice among many community colleges as a cost-effective and efficient approach to

cultivating talent. Community college cohort-based programs are usually unique to the

sponsoring organization, and individual outcomes vary depending on how the individual

implements the concepts after returning to work. While broad leadership development

interventions are valuable in the development of human capital, the efforts of the AACC and

participating community colleges are intended to connect the specific experiences provided to

the cohort with specific competencies (AACC, 2005). These leadership development

experiences are intended to step out of the classroom/workshop and be delivered in the

context and culture of the community college where the leader actually works. Collectively,

these experiences can complete the leadership repertoire by integrating the personal,

interpersonal, team, and organizational competencies of the six AACC Competencies for

Community College Leaders. To maximize the return on launching leadership development

programs, the college must be disciplined and supportive in introducing leadership development throughout the college, rather than bounded by specific senior level-only programs, skill-based workshops, and seminars (Hassan et al., 2010).

SUMMARY

While broad leadership development interventions can be valuable in the development of leaders, these strategies can be expanded beyond the approach of weekend seminars and required readings to step out of the classroom and deliver the context and culture of the community college where leaders actually work (AACC, 2005). Collectively, these training experiences can integrate the personal, interpersonal, and organizational dimensions of the six AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders to build both human and social capital. When doing so, community colleges must be disciplined and supportive in offering these types of leadership development at all department levels throughout the college.

This study seeks to build on prior literature regarding cohort-based leadership development programs in community colleges and measure the effectiveness of this specific type of training program. The intent is to provide the basis for improving the training curriculum, maximizing the transfer of learning behavior into subsequent organizational results, and demonstrating the value of these trainings to the sponsoring organization (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

INTRODUCTION

As indicated in the literature review, little research has been done to measure the outcomes or effectiveness of cohort-based leadership training models in the community college environment. Yet, many cohort-based programs have been implemented across this sector. Typically, these programs utilize a model of immersive training off-campus followed by a long-term group project intended to apply lessons learned and benefit the participant's sponsoring college. The purpose of this study is to explore the effectiveness of cohort-based leadership training programs from the perspective of participants. The researcher believes that a better understanding of the overall experience and related outcomes helps to determine if such programs are worth the investment for participants and institutions. This research could also provide necessary feedback regarding this training practice which can assist community colleges with programmatic changes and curriculum design. Specifically, this study aims to understand (a) alumni conclusions regarding program effectiveness, (b) alumni conclusions regarding how the program components contributed to leadership skills development, (c) how the program planned and executed social and human capital development, (d) how many alums have been retained and sought higher positions within their organization, and (e) what are the benefits for participants and sponsoring community colleges.

This chapter explicates the research method, rationale for approach, sample selection, program selection, participant selection, data collection methods, data analysis, reliability,

ethics, and study limitations.

RESEARCH METHOD

After reviewing several research methods, the researcher selected a mixed-methods convergent and comparative approach as the most appropriate for this study. Mixed-methods research allows the researcher to utilize both quantitative and qualitative research approaches to create a more comprehensive assessment of the research problem. In a convergent mixed-methods study, both data sets are collected and compared simultaneously (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As is often the case with mixed methods, this study has one form of data that is primary. In this instance, what was initially conceived as a qualitative study was expected to yield more fruitful results if conducted as mixed methods with quantitative data embedded in the design. Plano Clark et al. (2013) refer to these as embedded designs, defined as:

> Having an unequal priority in terms of the relative importance of the quantitative and qualitative components for addressing the study's research questions. Researchers choose an embedded approach when their research questions include primary and secondary questions, where one questions (e.g., the primary question) calls for a quantitative approach and the other question (e.g., the secondary question calls) for a qualitative approach. (p.223)

Rationale for Approach

Participants were targeted via contact with human resources departments and managing administrators for cohort-based leadership programs. The researcher used this initial contact to gauge the college's willingness and the extent to which they would participate in the study and get an institutional description of how specifically the program is intended to build social and human capital for comparative analysis. Based on the response, a specific program was selected for emailed surveys and a bounded case study was implemented through online

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interviews. Since the goal was to capture participants' unique "lived experience," this aspect of the study could be considered a phenomenological approach (Van Manen, 2014, p.26). This study used a quantitative approach to survey data to analyze alumni retention, individual leadership development, and perceived benefit for individuals that attended. Overall, the researcher expected to draw more comprehensive conclusions by using a concurrent mixed-methods approach in this study.

SAMPLE SELECTION

To create an appropriate qualitative study sample, the researcher utilized non-probabilistic purposeful sampling methods to select institutions and participants from whom to gather primary data, each meeting specific criteria set by the researcher. This approach rendered a sample where one can learn the most significant qualitative insights from the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Program Selection

United States community colleges or statewide systems that operate cohort-based training programs of eight or more months in length and 10 or greater participants per cohort were selected to receive initial contact from the researcher. The leadership program must have completed at least three cohorts to allow for richer data and comparison. This also increased the likelihood of reaching a more diverse pool of individuals to survey and subsequently interview. Based on these criteria, programs were identified by the researcher. The researcher contacted seven cohort-based leadership development programs in all, and one agreed to participate in the study. The regional cohort-based leadership training program selected will be

referred to as he Leadership Academy in this document, and all transcripts related to this study will be linked to The Leadership Academy for anonymity.

The Leadership Academy is a year-long leadership development program created for employees working at one of the 14-member community colleges within a specific regional consortium located within the United States. This program is open to those serving in any capacity at their college interested in exploring careers in administration. Each college can nominate as many candidates as it would like for participation in The Leadership Academy and may use its own internal selection process. The cohort is limited to 50 participants for each academic year.

The Leadership Academy was developed with input from consortium leaders, including members of the 2001–02 through 2019–20 cohorts, and is intended to be affordable, accessible, and practical. It supports basic skills for those who have had little administrative training or experience; yet it also claims to provide professional development opportunities for veteran administrators. Program instructors are experienced leaders at consortium colleges and national leaders who present and facilitate seminars at consortium conferences.

The Leadership Academy is built on (a) the annual activities of the consortium, such as leadership conferences; (b) an online course site to foster interaction across institutions; and (c) monthly workshops throughout the year exclusive to the cohort. Topics include:

- Budget and Finance
- Building Professional Resources and Networks
- Compliance and Reporting
- Dealing with Change

- Effective Communications

- Equity and Diversity

- Ethics

- Finding and Developing an Appropriate Leadership and Management Style

- Global Education

- Legal Issues

- Personnel Assessment and Evaluation

- Planning, Research, and Institutional Effectiveness

- Professional Development

- The Dynamic Community College

- Time Management

- Using Technology to Enhance Administration and Teaching-Learning

Participant Selection

Email contact with The Leadership Academy's program administrator was made to provide context for the study and gain permission to conduct research (see Appendix A). Since The Leadership Academy is run by an independent consortium and not by the member colleges, this study neither required permission from each member institution's Institutional Review Board (IRB), nor utilized any institutional resources.

The researcher collected the program participant contact list from the last five years to email a survey about several topics, including their response to the prescribed curriculum, the circumstances surrounding their enrollment, and career experiences (see Appendix B). The sample should be typical because it was assumed each participant enrolled in the leadership

development program voluntarily and wanted to improve their leadership capabilities. This provided the study with a shared perspective of the phenomena's importance.

Those who expressed interest in moving beyond the survey phase were required to confirm they had attended the cohort-based leadership training program after January 1, 2014. They were required to complete the self-evaluation portion of the survey where they rated themselves on the six competencies for emerging community college leaders defined by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). Also, those selected for an interview must have worked at the college for a minimum of two years in a capacity that would allow them to utilize some of the AACC leadership competencies claimed. In all interview transcripts, the research subjects are referred to as Participant with a number indicating the order in which they were interviewed. This is to protect their anonymity, as was agreed upon when they consented to the interview (see Appendix E).

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Phase I: Surveys

Online surveys were initially distributed to gain participant consent and identify potential matches to the study's selection criteria. The survey was created using an online service, and a web link was sent to the approved employee lists via email. To encourage survey completion, participants that finished could opt-in for a chance to win an Amazon gift card.

The survey primarily consisted of demographic and qualifying closed-ended questions, where the researcher requested specific answers. A Likert scale was also utilized as a self-assessment tool. Respondents were asked to compare themselves to the AACC leadership competencies for emerging leaders, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The AACC

leadership competencies for emerging leaders are widely accepted in higher education while also applicable to leaders from all career levels of the community college. This approach matches The Leadership Academy's commitment to serving those interested in developing a career in community college administration, from entry to veteran level experience.

The researcher password protected the approved lists and survey results, ensuring the participants' identities and personal information were handled securely. The researcher also set the response criteria and timeframe to ensure that the targeted number of 13 potential interviewees would be met from the larger population of The Leadership Academy alumni provided in the contact list. The demographic information, professional experience, and leadership competency rankings collected in these surveys shaped the interview questions.

Phase II: Interviews

Follow-up interviews were scheduled online with those who indicated they would be willing to discuss the topics further, as participants were encouraged to schedule and complete an interview to receive an Amazon gift card (see Appendix C). Interviews are an appropriate research tool when respondents are asked to recall their experiences with past events (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, the geographic disparity from the researcher and large sampling pool dictated that interviews be conducted over Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) (Salmons, 2015). The CMC web-based video conferencing program used was WebEx, but other options were offered based on the comfort of the participant with this software option.

A synchronous environment was established, which allowed the researcher and the participant to communicate in real-time, simulating a face-to-face interview environment (Berg, 2007). A semi-structured interview guide was used to allow for additional discussion that would

fall outside the planned framework while still allowing the participant to provide an appropriate response. This lack of rigidity encouraged interviewees to relax and be candid with the researcher. It should be noted that results were compiled, coded, and categorized as interviews were conducted. In qualitative studies, the data analysis process is a constant cycle as researchers continually work to make sense of the information. New questions surface, and a deeper understanding of the subject is gained in every iteration of the analytical process since there are few universally accepted steps for qualitative studies (National Science Foundation, 1997). Miles and Huberman (1984) stated: "We have few agreed-on canons for qualitative data analysis, in the sense of shared ground rules for drawing conclusions and verifying their sturdiness" (p. 10).

Regarding this study, the interviewer made a conscious effort to write down comments and observations along with the recorded interview responses. Computer software was utilized throughout the data collection process, which assisted with fast processing and modeling the data. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest researchers test patterns and themes on participants as they arise. Asking participants what they think of data trends in the research will be a relevant assessment to explore as more data becomes available. For example, outliers could be pressed for comment on why something was so important to their experience while it may not have been to other participants. The causes that lead to a particular perspective are just as important as identifying its significance.

Table 4: Information Collected for the Study

DATA COLLECTION METHOD	DATA TYPE	COLLECTED
Literature Review	Theoretical	Grounds for the Study
Phase I: Survey	Quantitative	Demographic Information Interview Qualification

DATA COLLECTION METHOD	DATA TYPE	COLLECTED
Phase II: Interviews	Qualitative	Curriculum Analysis Reflection Outcomes Overall Assessment

While there is often a question of authenticity and performance with online

interactions, the question was not deemed a concern with this study. For the most part, any

gestures, facial expressions, and nonverbal cues were visible to the researcher. Also, it should

be noted that qualitative researchers should not engage in determining whether a subject is

telling the truth or not (Sullivan, 2012). The researcher made reasonable attempts to value

information objectively and prevent bias.

When using video conferencing, the interviewer must deal with the potential for

technical difficulties. Internet speeds can vary, and users may have issues utilizing the software,

especially if they have not used it before. However, the convenience of online interviewing was

weighed against the potential problems of alternative data collection methods. It was

determined that technical issues could potentially arise both in-person and online. For example,

tape recorders break or need new batteries, computers malfunction and researchers may

forget to press record (Sullivan, 2012).

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were collected through survey questionnaires and existing contact

lists compiled by The Leadership Academy program coordinator. The researcher used Creswell's

(2015) explanatory sequential mixed methods design. The quantitative data in this study were

collected first, driving eligibility and participant selection for qualitative data collection. The

qualitative data intended to provide a more in-depth explanation of the quantitative results. All

data sets were inspected for errors and cleaned as needed.

Qualitative Data Analysis

In this study, the researcher selected a purposeful sample and collected quantitative

data to guide the initial qualitative interviews. In addition, simultaneous qualitative data

collection and analysis allowed the researcher to shape future interviews based on the

information discovered along the way. Without concurrent data collection and analysis, data

can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming due to sheer volume (Merriam & Tisdell,

2016). The researcher followed seven of the 10 recommendations set forth by Bogdan and

Biklen (2011) for conducting a simultaneous qualitative data collection and analysis process:

1. Make decisions that narrow the study.

2. Force yourself to make decisions concerning the type of study you want to
   accomplish. This was especially pertinent to the study, given the lack of prior
   research and literature available on cohort-based leadership training models in
   community colleges.

3. Develop analytic questions.

4. Write comments and memos during all data collection activities and review notes
   frequently. This allowed the researcher to identify specific leads to pursue during
   future data collection efforts.

5. Plan data collection sessions according to what you find in previous observations.

6. Write memos to yourself about what you are learning.

7. Test ideas and themes on the participants. When the researcher noticed a specific
   pattern developing during data collection, asking participants if those themes were
   appropriate proved helpful.

The remaining three recommendations, (1) Exploring the literature while in the field; (2) Playing with metaphors, analogies, and concepts; and (3) Using visual devices, were not necessary for this study.

Using the constant comparative method for qualitative data analysis, the researcher created a coding system for this study. The constant comparative method compares one segment of the data with another to determine similarities and differences. Data were then grouped based on similar dimensions, which evolve into categories. Relying on the guidance of Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the researcher used categories that were exhaustive, mutually exclusive, sensitive to the data, and conceptually congruent. Categories were used to identify patterns, allowing the researcher to recognize an evolving theme during the study.

Creswell (2013) recommends a manageable amount of approximately 25 to 30 data categories at the beginning, which can be winnowed down through the data reduction process. An electronic summary document of the data was created and consistently updated for quick reference. As is recommended, this electronic inventory of data, codes, and summaries was then saved on a flash drive, computer hard drive, and a cloud storage server with every update (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This practice allowed for greater security of the data, minimized the potential for loss, and ensured quick retrieval of concepts or categories compared to a paper-based system.

QUALITY: GENERALIZATION VERSUS TRANSFERABILITY

For the quantitative portion of this study, quality is inherent in the researcher's process and content submissions. Survey questions, statistical analysis processes, and assumptions are documented here to ensure that the study could be replicated and demonstrate that

appropriate measures were taken. Because this mixed-methods study is primarily qualitative, the researcher seeks to provide a high-quality extrapolation of the qualitative data. Strategies can be developed from this transferred knowledge and employed in future circumstances, but statistical generalizations or replications of the data are not possible compared to a quantitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Eisner (1998, p. 103–104), qualitative research is guided by the participants' experiences. When interviewing participants, the researcher must focus on recalling the various situations participants have confronted, making sense of those situations, and internalizing lessons that could guide them in the future. In a qualitative research study, researchers capture these experiences, interpret the data, and ensure transferability of the results.

Transferability requires that most readers find enough similarity between their circumstances and the study to act on its findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, variation was an important consideration when selecting participants for this study. Time in the role, varying geographic locations, and differing institutions enabled the researcher to find patterns across a broad sample to enhance transferability.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Data were triangulated and placed into software-rendered visual models for analysis. The researcher used member checks or respondent validation, as patterns arose, to confirm the direction the research was headed and to enhance the line of questioning for upcoming interviews. By asking participants about noteworthy preliminary findings, the researcher appropriately represented the participant's perspective throughout the interpretation process. This technique also allowed the participants to comment on or react to the quantitative data

gathered thus far. The intent is to validate the study further, as the researcher asked

participants for alternative ways to arrive at the findings. This practice shows the researcher is

acting with integrity and transparency (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

To make an assurance argument of reliability, the researcher must divulge his position in

the context of the research study. Maxwell (2013, p.124) indicates that researchers must

explain their values and expectations of the study to provide a reliable picture of how the

researcher arrived at his interpretation of the data. This researcher has worked in higher

education for 17 years and has spent seven years in the community college environment. He

has held formal leadership roles to supervise direct reports for seven years of his career. He has

also participated in nine different leadership training programs, including one cohort-based

model at a community college. The researcher is also a student in the Doctorate of Community

College Leadership program at Ferris State University, for which this dissertation is being

written as the capstone project. This dissertation is prepared with the continual aid of a

dissertation chair and committee with knowledge of the subject that allows for concepts and

findings to pass through a peer-review process as the study is being written.

Another reliability feature that this study has employed is an audit trail. The audit trail

allows the reader to understand how the researcher interacted with the data through a

detailed description of the process and findings. Interview quotations, background information,

and researcher's field notes are presented to give the reader adequate context for the study.

Given the mixed methods approach to the research, the reader has an account of issues and

concerns that came about from comparing data and how the researcher handled those

concerns. The patterns and assumptions created at each stage of the research process are

conveyed, outlining if and how changes were made. Such documentation is intended to lend

depth and credibility to the study's findings. The researcher wants to assure the reader that a

meticulous approach to the methodology was followed.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher successfully defended a proposal for this study and subsequently

adhered to all guidelines and policies of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Ferris State

University per the conditions of their approval. The researcher sought informed consent from

all participants and protected their identities in the document and during the data collection

process. The researcher has disclosed any relationships with participants in the study and

ensured that the interviews conducted remained topical and pertinent to the research. As

Patton (2002) suggested, the researcher approached the research process with the principal

purpose of gathering data yet was not unresponsive if any participant recounted any

unresolved issues or concerns that stemmed from the related line of questioning. The

researcher was willing to offer additional resources or points of contact to any participants with

matters that should be addressed. The researcher also completed the Social and Behavioral

Based Research on Human Subjects course through the CITI Program (CITI Program, n.d.). This

course was endorsed by Ferris State University and served to heighten the researcher's

awareness of any potential ethical considerations or issues during this process.

Ethical concerns stemming from online teleconferences were also addressed. While all

identifiers were removed for the transcripts and future documentation, there exists the

possibility of a participant's identity being revealed from the video conference transmission

where security has been compromised or legal investigation requires online records to be

accessed. For example, most teleconferencing software tools reserve the right to keep and access the conferencing session at any time. The researcher made all reasonable attempts to inform participants of these possibilities in the consent form. Participants were also encouraged to create separate logins from existing or personal accounts if they had any security concerns.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

The curriculum of a cohort-based leadership development program may vary based on the organizer's preferences, current leadership trends, and composition of the cohort. This study did gather and report aspects of the program's curriculum; however, it was a by-product of the data collected. Curriculum content and delivery method were not program selection criteria, while each participant's perspectives, experiences, and outcomes were central to this research.

Also, since sponsoring institutions provided the researcher with contact lists, the information for any prior participant who has separated from the institution could have been either inaccurate or unavailable and this may have impacted participation from this pool of potential interviewees and affected the results of this study.

The selected parameters of this study worked within the time limitations of the researcher, as identifying approved subjects, conducting interviews, and writing the dissertation were originally designed to be completed in the spring of 2020. Patricia Adler of the University of Colorado and Peter Adler of the University of Denver give credence to determining an appropriate size for doctoral studies, especially when the research required has similar time constraints (Baker & Edwards, 2012). However, the timing and scope of this study were unexpectedly impacted by the COVID-19 global pandemic. The research was suspended

for 12 months due to the researcher's diminished personal capacity to continue the study.

There was also a reluctance from several leadership development program coordinators—that

were up until the pandemic cordial and cooperative—to consider approving additional tasks

like this study for their alumni, given the current burden the pandemic may have been causing

individuals. This apprehension did not surprise the researcher, as these programs were either

canceled for 2020 or moved to a virtual format.

SUMMARY

This chapter described the methodology that was used in investigating the following

research questions:

1. How did participation in the cohort-based leadership training program contribute to skill development?

2. How did specific program components contribute to participants' growth as leaders?

3. What retention or promotional gains have occurred after participating?

4. What are the benefits of the program?

To examine these questions, the researcher conducted a convergent mixed methods

study, incorporating the findings from one method (online survey) with the conclusions of a

second method (video conference interviews) to provide a comprehensive assessment of the

research problem.

The primary research process was a bounded case study conducted through program

alumni interviews to gain primary data on alumni perspectives on program effectiveness and

skills development. Data obtained through the online survey measured retention, promotion

and benefits experienced by each participant. The data were analyzed using qualitative and

quantitative methods, respectively. Chapter Four will discuss those research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

As indicated in the literature review, little research has been done to measure the

outcomes or effectiveness of cohort-based leadership training models in the community college

environment. Yet, many cohort-based programs are being implemented across this sector.

Typically, these programs utilize a model of immersive training off-campus followed by a long-

term group project intended to apply lessons learned and benefit the participant's sponsoring

college. The purpose of this study is to explore the effectiveness of cohort-based leadership

training programs from the perspective of participants. The researcher believes that a better

understanding of the overall experience and related outcomes helps determine if such

programs are worth the investment. This research could also provide necessary feedback

regarding this training practice which can assist community colleges with programmatic

changes and curriculum design. Specifically, this study aims to understand: (a) alumni

conclusions regarding program effectiveness; (b) alumni conclusions regarding how the

program components contributed to leadership skills development; (c) how the program

planned and executed social and human capital development; (d) how many alums have been

retained and sought higher positions within the organization; and (e) what are the benefits for

participants and sponsoring institutions.

The researcher conducted this study using a convergent and comparative mixed-

methods approach, as outlined in Chapter Three. A regional cohort-based leadership training

program, referred to as The Leadership Academy in this document, was selected as the subject

of this study. The Leadership Academy is a year-long leadership development program created

for employees working at one of 14-member community colleges within a specific regional

consortium located within the United States. This program is open to those serving in any

capacity at their college who are interested in exploring careers in administration. This allowed

the researcher access to a diverse sample of participants relative to their campus size,

institutional goals, and job function all at once, without requiring the direct involvement of

multiple institutions.

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Data collection in this study consisted of online surveys to gain consent and match

participants with the study's selection criteria, followed by in-depth interviews with qualified

participants. Survey data were compiled concurrently, and pseudonyms were assigned to

protect participants' identities. The researcher anticipated that drawing on multiple forms of

data with the combined use of qualitative and quantitative approaches would lead to an

expanded understanding of the participant experience in cohort-based leadership development

programs.

Online Survey

Data collection for the online survey occurred between February 14, 2021, and March

20, 2021. The survey (see Appendix C) was sent electronically to all alumni of The Leadership

Academy that attended after January 1, 2014. The total population of potential respondents

was 180. Invitations to participate (see Appendix D) included a link to the online survey and all

communication was conducted using the email addresses provided by The Leadership Academy program coordinator. Initial invitations to participants were sent out on February 14, 2021. A reminder was sent to the same population approximately two weeks into the data collection period, March 1, 2021. At the questionnaire closing date, a total of 64 responses were received for a response rate of 35.55%.

Follow-up Interviews

Interviews occurred via online conferences between February 23, 2021, and March 15, 2021. Following the criteria outlined in Chapter Three, the researcher identified a group of potential interview participants who represented the following characteristics:

- Attended the cohort-based leadership training program after January 1, 2014

- Completed the self-evaluation portion of the initial study, where they rated themselves on the six competencies for emerging community college leaders defined by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)

- Worked at their institution for a minimum of two years.

The researcher met the target goal of 13 interviews out of 29 survey respondents who had indicated they were willing to discuss the topic further and were each sent an interview invitation (see Appendix D). This equates to a 44.8% participation rate of those invited to interview. Each participant acknowledged an informed consent document before his or her interview (see Appendix E), and each participant was asked the same primary set of interview questions (see Appendix F). Interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

The researcher followed data analysis methodologies described by Bogdan and Biklen (2011), Creswell (2015), Merriam and Tisdell (2016), and Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) to

analyze the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the online survey and follow-up interviews.

All quantitative data in this study were collected through the online survey using closed-ended questions and Likert scales. The researcher followed the Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) four-step process for systematic qualitative data analysis. This involved (1) reviewing and exploring the data to identify "big ideas," (2) examining the data to code and categorize, (3) reporting the findings, and (4) interpreting the findings. After reviewing all collected data from surveys and interviews, the researcher identified recurring themes.

SURVEY RESPONDENT AND INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

This study included a variety of participants that were alumni of The Leadership Academy. To provide context to the study findings, it is important to describe the composition of these survey respondents and interview participants. The following demographic data represents those respondents and participants.

Online Survey Respondent Demographics

Of the 64 survey respondents, ages ranged from 25 years old to 65 and older, with 40.63% representing the 35–44 age group. Females made up 68.75% of respondents, 29.69% were male, and one preferred not to respond, representing 1.56% of those surveyed. The majority of respondents (92.19%) did not identify as Hispanic or Latino, and when asked to define their race further, the largest category was White/Caucasian (65.63%). This is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Online Survey Respondent Race
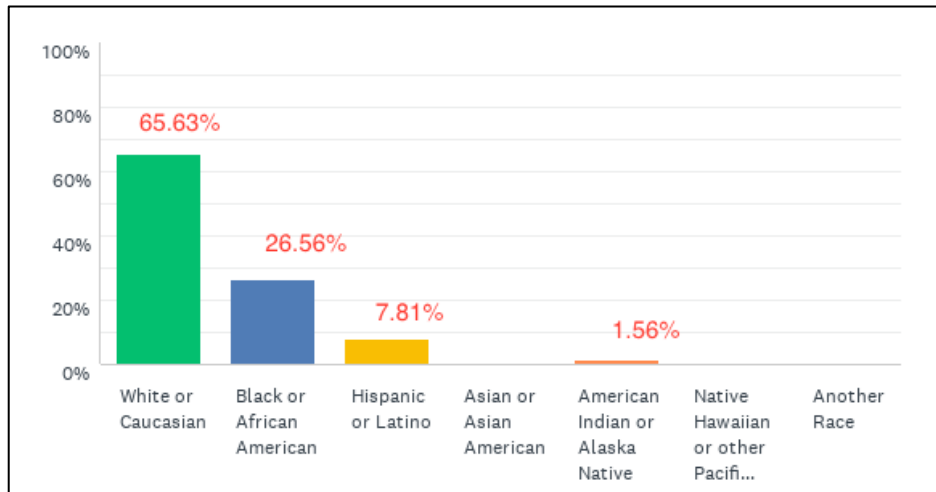
Sixty-one out of 64 respondents (over 95% surveyed) have earned a graduate degree, and 61.9% have been employed in higher education between 10 and 20 years. This career longevity may explain why the lower echelons of annual household income were not well represented, as over 80% reported a household income of $75,000 or more per year. This is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Household Income of Online Survey Respondents
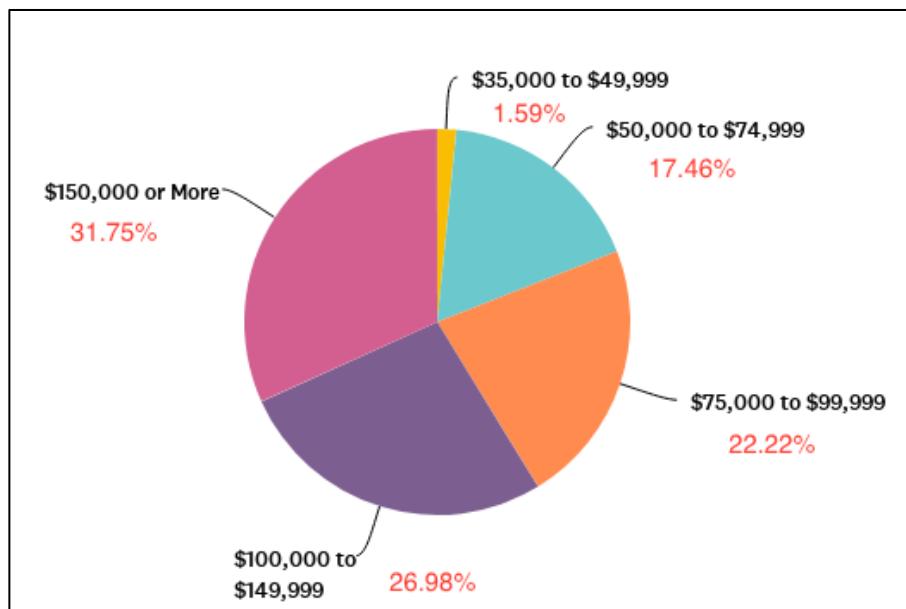
A variety of positions and support staff functions were represented in the online survey, as noted in the following table:

Table 5: Online Survey Respondent Employee Classification

EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATION	PERCENT REPRESENTED
Administrative Assistant	1.59
Student Services staff, including Admissions/Enrollment, Advising/Counseling, Testing/Assessment, Financial Aid, Library, Bookstore, Tutoring, Student Life, Veteran Services, and Job Placement	33.33
Faculty	34.92
Instructional Support, such as Program and Lab Assistants	1.59
Other (please specify) Marketing, Academic Affairs, Administration, HR, Institutional Research, Advancement, Campus Director, Continuing Education, Grant Development, Academic Support Services, Learning and Organizational Development	28.57

Notably missing were respondents from the following categories:

- Business Services, including Accounting, Mailroom, and Printing

- Technical Support Staff, such as Media Services and IT

- Dining Services

- Campus Security

- Facilities, Grounds, and Maintenance

As previously mentioned, a total of 64 responses were received, yielding a response rate of 35.55%. While that may appear to be low, the participant demographics seem to be fairly representative of the overall demographics of those working in community colleges nationwide. For example, the American Association of Community Colleges reported that in 2016, nearly 75% of community college faculty, 73% of management, and 63% of student services professionals are White/Caucasian. Within the faculty, 77% of full-time faculty reported as

White compared to 74% of part-time faculty (AACC, 2018). Women also hold the bulk of administrative, academic affairs, and instructional staff positions (AACC, 2013). According to Dey (1997), a survey yielding a very low response rate could still do "a fairly good job of representing the population from which the sample was originally drawn. This would be the case if the 10% who responded to this survey were quite similar to the 90% who failed to respond." The researcher found this to be the case and determined that the 35.5% response rate was more than adequate for this study.

Interview Participant Demographics

As previously stated, the interview participants were selected from the online survey sample and should be considered as a subset of that data. The age range of the 13 participants interviewed was more evenly distributed than the larger online survey group, as shown in Figure 3 below. The even distribution was also true with regard to gender, except for one participant who preferred not to answer. This is represented in Figure 4.

Figure 3. Age Ranges of Interview Participants
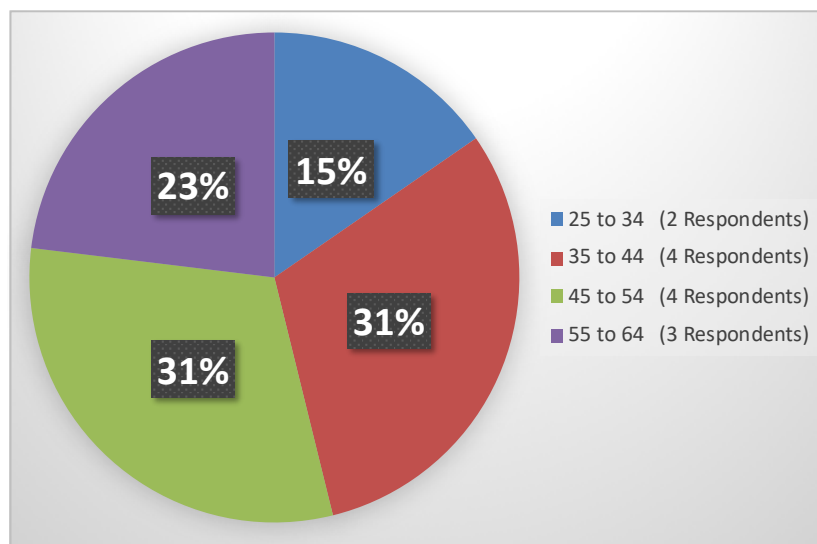
Figure 4. Gender of Interview Participants
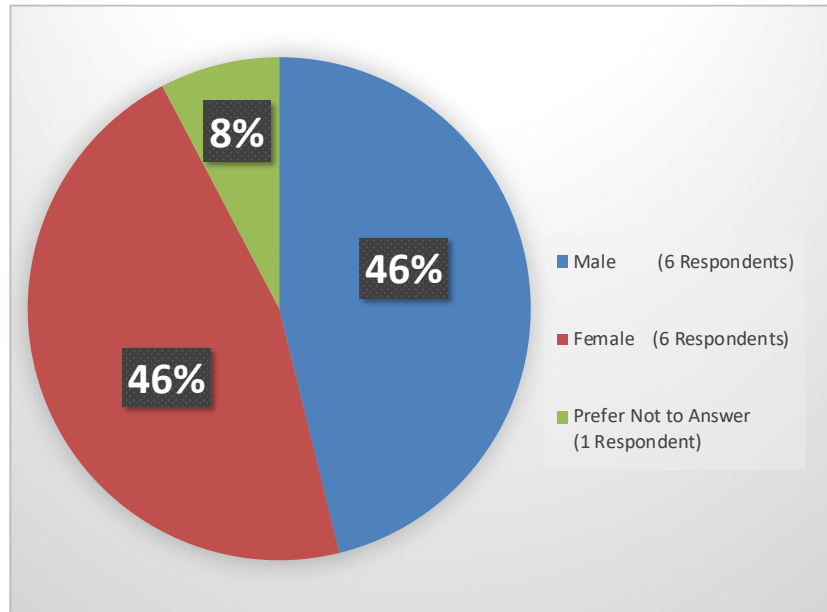
The majority of interview participants (92.3%) did not identify as Hispanic or Latino, and when asked to define their race further, the largest category was White/Caucasian (84.6%). Out of 13 interview participants, 12 (92.3%) have earned a graduate degree and 62.9% have been employed in higher education between 10 and 20 years. Again, longevity could translate to income in the interview participant subset, as 76.9% reported a household income of $75,000 or more per year. A variety of positions and support staff functions were represented in the interview phase, as noted in the following table:

Table 6: Interview Participant Employee Classification

EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATION	PERCENT REPRESENTED
Student Services staff, including: Admissions/Enrollment, Advising/Counseling, Testing/Assessment, Financial Aid, Library, Bookstore, Tutoring, Student Life, Veteran Services, and Job Placement	46.15
Faculty	23.07
Other (please specify): Marketing, Advancement, Learning and Organizational Development	28.57

FINDINGS: RESEARCH QUESTION 1

How did participation in the cohort-based leadership training program contribute to skill development?

The researcher conducted a preliminary review of all interview data and identified nine

themes related to the first question (see Appendix H). These themes represent the various

program outcomes of The Leadership Academy that participants believe contributed to

leadership skills development, including (1) shared processes and best practices, (2) broadened

institutional leadership perspective, (3) improved critical thinking strategies, (4) academic rigor

similar to graduate coursework, (5) improved networking skills, (6) improved planning and

resilience through change, (7) improved research and project management skills, (8) recognized

need for accountability and decisiveness in leadership, and (9) improved use of language in

leadership.

Broadened Perspective of Institutional Leadership and Improved Networking Skills

The most common themes throughout the interviews indicated that The Leadership

Academy broadened the participants' perspective of institutional leadership and improved

networking skills. All 13 participants described ways that the program accomplished this. Based

on participant description, some of the ways this cohort-based program broadened

perspectives on leadership included finding ways to lead at every employment level, comparing

community college leadership to previous experiences, and employing appropriate tactics as a

part of an overall situational leadership strategy. As George indicated, "I had not had the

experience or the exposure to that more upper executive level leadership, or what it takes to

manage and balance so many different constituencies, so it just broadened my perspective."

Both Keisha and Enrique made similar comments, as Keisha mentioned she has "a better understanding of community college leadership" because she had more experience working in four-year institutions. She realized that "the same leadership approach doesn't work for every situation." Enrique added that he has learned there is a way to lead "in whatever you are doing and at whatever position you are currently in" and "to think about things in a more strategic way." David added that he gained a new "awareness of the constant presence of organizational politics and then how to navigate those politics in a positive and productive way."

With regard to improved networking skills, some participants related it to the strategic mission of the college to explain why networking is so important. For example, Deb said "to run a community college is totally grassroots. What those presidents of the campus are doing… they're doing grassroots campaigning is what they're doing." George also addressed how the program hones participants' networking skills intentionally: "I got to know a lot of people and built some of those relationships that I wouldn't have had otherwise. (The program coordinator) always makes you talk to everybody… she has very good facilitation skills."

Sharing Best Practices, Improved Research / Project Management, Accountability / Decisiveness and Language of Leadership

Of the 13 interviewees, 12 (92.3%) mentioned sharing best practices, improving research or project management skills, recognizing the accountability or decisiveness of leadership, and utilizing the language of leadership more effectively as additional skills developed during The Leadership Academy. These themes were often framed as part of the technical or everyday skills personally acquired in the program as opposed to the strategic leadership perspectives and expanded networking resources mentioned earlier in the chapter.

Specifically, Enrique cited "having people know my abilities outside of my department" and the opportunity "to learn from folks who are doing good work in other places" as benefits of sharing best practices among participants of the program.

Based on the participants' descriptions, the structure and expectations of the program helped them understand the importance of effective research and project management. Kim noted: "I learned that in some instances… it's okay to pause and to research and to gather my thoughts… to really not be paralyzed in the research phase, feeling that I don't know enough to make a move."

Cheryl connected this type of research to the concept of leadership accountability, explaining that "in a leadership position… you take all aspects and sides into consideration, but at some point, you have to make a decision… sometimes quickly… to have the guts to stand behind it and take the heat sometimes." David expanded on this balance of being informed, decisive, and accountable when he mentioned "being mindful of the impact over intentions… as a leader, it's not simply about having good intentions. You have to think about the impact that you're having."

To lead effectively, participants also pointed out that leaders must communicate respectfully, consistently, and with transparency. Jeffrey articulated the need to utilize the language of leadership properly:

> There are certain times throughout the year where… you don't want to go disrupt the registrar or financial aid office. That insight has helped me in terms of some of the timing of when we plan communications to the college. If you're going to lead a department, you need to understand the other departments around you and how there's an interaction. If you don't understand the perspective, it's really impossible to figure out how to put the puzzle together so that it all fits. When you can temper that communication in a way that makes people feel important, encouraged, and nurtured… you're going to get a lot more done but you're also developing that relationship.

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David agreed about the importance of carefully planning one's communications as a leader, especially with students:

> Thinking about your audience and what message is going to resonate with each one of your particular audiences without losing saliency… and the purpose of your message. We started being more intentional about how we create consistency in the language of our programs, to where students can see a thread throughout… more of a scaffold approach.

Improved Critical Thinking Strategies and Resilience Through Change

Out of the 13 interview participants, 11 (84.6%) described a connection between attending The Leadership Academy and improved critical thinking skills and resilience. George described his experience as:

> Thinking about important issues through multiple lenses and making it a part of your decision making… can sometimes seem really abstract. So, to be able to apply it so practically (in the project) and see results… feels like you're using it as opposed to just trying to remember to say things in a particular way sometime in the future…. It made me less scared to talk to a president. The more you can learn to think like a president does, the better you can help a president.

He also connected The Leadership Academy's benefits to transformational leadership within his organization and how he is more prepared to face changes to come. George emphasized how the program "reinforced the importance and the value of that mid-level position and being that conduit between the strategic work of an organization or institution and the day-to-day work… to make that transformational strategic work a reality." Walter added: "A good leader needs to be flexible because honestly the team changes a lot. You don't always have the same group of people surrounding you."

Academic Rigor Similar to Graduate Coursework

Participant answers in the interview revealed a final theme with regard to skills development. Six of the 13 interview participants (46.2%) said The Leadership Academy felt like the rigor of a graduate school course and, in some instances, was even used to earn actual academic credit. Susan emphasized what she felt was a familiar structure saying, "there's a curriculum to it… it's just like taking a graduate class." Deb was a bit more direct when she stated: "Because of that darn project… I was like… shoot… I can go back to get my master's degree. I can do that. I'd be fine."

Karen stated that earning graduate credit by completing The Leadership Academy was a key reason she chose to participate: "You can get a certain amount of grad credit… so that was an added incentive for me." This idea that attending The Leadership Academy cohort-based training program resulted in skills development was pervasive throughout the conducted interviews.

FINDINGS: RESEARCH QUESTION 2

How did specific program components contribute to participants' growth as leaders?

The researcher identified nine themes related to the second question (see Appendix H). These themes represent the specific components of The Leadership Academy that participants believe contributed most to their growth as leaders, including hearing leadership perspectives from presenters, visiting campus facilities, reading the required text, the diversity of participants and presenters, the required project, the presentation of the project at a conference, and an emphasis on administration and academic affairs.

Leadership Perspectives, Campus Facilities, and Diversity of Participants

The components of The Leadership Academy that were most commonly mentioned in the interviews were hearing leadership perspectives, visiting campus facilities, and working with a diverse group of participants. Of the 13 interview participants, 10 (76.9%) described these specific components as the most significant contributors to their growth as leaders. Keisha framed the leadership perspectives as an opportunity by saying, "Go into it with an open mind and take value in what you're hearing from other professionals."

Kim explained that she came to understand that "they [presidents] are real people who had boots on the ground" and "maybe didn't wake up one day and decide I'm going to be president." George added "It helped me realize that… lots of different kinds of people can become a community college president and that was pretty cool."

Pat gave a more candid response about hearing the realities of becoming a campus president when she said:

> I felt like every keynote speaker every week just told us that they got to be a campus president because the outgoing campus president thought they were a really good guy and pulled him up by the bootstrings... And things don't work like that anymore. None of us are going to get that.

Despite the travel involved, cohort members also described their appreciation for the tour of regional community colleges and the diversity of participants in The Leadership Academy. Enrique said the "connections with peers across the state" influenced his leadership growth. George emphasized the unique "opportunity to go to like eight or nine different colleges around the region and find out about them." Jeffrey provided a tangible example of how this had an impact on his work:

Our new Executive Vice President for Advancement in the foundation where I work came from a really small rural college who was also a participant… I was familiar with that college when she transferred not just because I heard of it, but I had actually been at that campus.

Pat contributed, "Just to see the facilities that other campuses have was really helpful and interesting… some of them have writing labs in them… some of them have café areas… some don't."

Project Work Beyond Day-to-Day Role and Presenting at a Conference

Nine of the 13 interview participants (69.2%) described the project work required of The Leadership Academy cohort as one of the most significant contributors to their leadership growth. Seven of 13 (53.8%) mentioned the importance of attending a capstone conference at the end of the program to present the project and grow as a recognized leader in the field. Kim emphasized how her project had a direct impact on her campus, stating "My project for the program was a symposium that is now an annual event that we host for our campus."

Susan also took the "culminating project" to her campus to "get the ball rolling" on her group's ideas and prepare to present the outcomes at an upcoming conference. While there, she saw past cohort members delivering their projects, which allowed her to "build those bridges and connections in between cohorts." Jeffrey emphasized that "the insight that went into doing it [the conference] was very well thought out and it wasn't a waste of time."

Emphasis on Administration and Academic Affairs

Six of the 13 participants (46.2%) cited The Leadership Academy's emphasis on administration and academic affairs. Kim specifically mentioned how the "case studies had

more to do with the academic affairs side [of the college]." Cheryl "gained a clearer understanding" of what a lot of other departments do, she went on to say, "It's meant to be a resource, if you're interested in maybe going into administration or maybe taking on another role outside of your current one." Not all comments were positive. Cheryl used this leadership growth topic to convey her overall opinion of the program.

> As someone in instruction… I think other professional development opportunities would be more relevant. I just wish there would have been a little bit more focus on instructional leadership… it's hard for me to attend higher ed events and instruction isn't even a part of the conversation. I feel like that is the true mission of why we exist.

Required Reading

Strong opinions of the required reading were prevalent during interviews as well. Seven out of the 13 interview participants (53.8%) mentioned the assigned text without being prompted. Four out of the 13 participants (30.8%) indicated that the text had a positive impact on their leadership growth in the program, while three out of 13 (23.1%) gave it a less favorable review. Karen described it as "a practical guide to leadership… of dos and don'ts." David thought the book "was a really good book," and went on to say that "the context and the content went really well together." Darryl's comments were a little more scathing: "We had a book that was really big … really dry… I wouldn't do that again." George explained that "the book was really good for the first two to three chapters and then it became very repetitive." Cheryl also "wasn't crazy about the book." She elaborated: "We were divided into groups to do a presentation over a chapter in this book. I just felt like there were more valuable ways to come together as a group and produce something."

FINDINGS: RESEARCH QUESTION 3

What retention or promotional gains have occurred after participating?

The interviews revealed various outcomes related to promotions or additional responsibility to engage and retain employees at their home community college. Only three of the 13 participants (30.8%) claimed to have been promoted since The Leadership Academy. Five participants (38.5%) said they had taken a lateral move or had no change in position or title. Yet 12 of the 13 participants (92.3%) said they had been given additional responsibility since completion. Table 7 shows the themes, results, and notable quotations gathered from this portion of the interview.

Table 7: Participant Promotions, Lateral Moves, and Additional Responsibility

PARTICIPANT	PROMOTION SINCE PROGRAM	LATERAL MOVE SINCE PROGRAM	ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITY SINCE PROGRAM	NO CHANGE
Kim		X	X	
I'm still in the same position that I was in when I went through the program.				
Enrique	X		X	
My current position resulted from getting into that program.				
George		X	X	
It doesn't pay like a promotion… but in terms of responsibility and amounts of work, it's certainly more.				
Susan		X	X	
It got me on the radar of our provost… who then went, well, you should go work over here.				
Karen		X	X	
Unfortunately, it wasn't a promotion… it was a lateral move. What it did do was actually put me in a smaller department with more responsibility.				
Cheryl				X
Almost immediately I got a very nice raise that I probably should have had a long time ago.				
Keisha			X	X

Participant	Promotion Since Program	Lateral Move Since Program	Additional Responsibility Since Program	No Change
	I would say the growth has been less on title and been more on responsibilities and scope of work.			
David		X	X	
	I have gone after two positions. Same result both times where I didn't get the job, but there's a lot of moving parts.			
Darryl			X	X
	Not a promotion, but I have a central role in a major reorganization of the libraries.			
Pat			X	X
	I love what I do and will retire doing this.			
Jeff	X		X	
	I was a manager at the time that I started it… about a year later I was promoted to director.			
Deb	X		X	
	I was a success coach… I'm now an advisor. It was a big jump.			
Walter			X	X
	I'm president of the faculty association… and yeah that's certainly more responsibility.			
Total (percent)	3 (23.1%)	5 (38.5%)	12 (92.3%)	5 (38.5%)

FINDINGS: RESEARCH QUESTION 4

What are the benefits of the program?

The researcher identified 12 themes related to the fourth question (see Appendix H) that represent the specific benefits of participating in The Leadership Academy. Participants reported that the program enabled them to:

- Network relationships as expanded resources

- Contributed project work to participating institution

- Develop a collaborative spirit

- Identify their own executive aspirations within higher education

- Build personal and organizational confidence

- Engage in career revelation and self-discovery

- Clarify and define specific career goals

- Identify guidance toward career goals

- Getting out of [the program] what they put into it

- Understand what is expected at the executive level

- Get out of the office

- Develop a renewed personal commitment to learning

Networking Relationships as Expanded Resources, Project Work, and Collaborative Spirit

All 13 interview participants (100%) cited The Leadership Academy's networking opportunities as a way to expand resources in their current role. Enrique described it as "an opportunity to connect with great thinkers in this field," while George considered the advantages to "having a much broader network… who know me and have seen me in lots of contexts." Keisha recalled that "there was an individual that led efforts on her campus for the guided pathways program. I was able to take that information and share to move that forward."

Kim mentioned how she "talked [The Leadership Academy program coordinator] into being a keynote speaker for one of the events… on campus." Deb had a similar experience as she "used [The Leadership Academy program coordinator] as a reference for my job currently, but I also asked her for a reference for grad school."

When calling on others for help, Susan emphasized how "the relationship just immediately picks up because you had this shared experience." Karen added: "I made some

really good friendships out of it… gives you that toolkit and that network and just additional

resources."

Jeffrey shared an example of when his Leadership Academy network unexpectedly gave

credence to a presentation he gave at a conference:

I had an advocate that I didn't realize because it was a familiar face from the program. When I left the room, the person's like, oh yeah… I know him… and kind of vouched for me. I had someone in there who was advocating for something because of a connection that was established.

All 13 interviewees also mentioned the collaborative spirit fostered within this type of

cohort-based leadership development program. Cheryl gave specific instances where her

department "collaborated with library services… student services on some projects… and a lot

of that came as a result of those relationships that were built," whereas Deb expressed her

appreciation for how "working with that group of people makes you more aware of social

issues."

Self-Identified Executive Aspirations within Higher Education

Out of the 13 participants interviewed, 12 described how The Leadership Academy

could help individual participants identify as someone with executive aspirations. George said,

"When you show an interest in participating the whole year of something like [The Leadership

Academy] then you're on the radar even more of getting plugged into other opportunities."

Pat described it as:

…a badge… I have some credibility because I've been through the program. I realized that there is a club of the people who want to become community college presidents… and they know when the jobs are posted. That those people have certain steps they need to go through… and certainly people they should know. I'm not saying this is a bad thing… that when we talk about community college leadership, that's who and what

we're talking about. We're really not talking about the people in community college who get the work done. It was more political.

Walter also supported this idea of The Leadership Academy as an intentional approach

to succession planning:

> Your name gets put in the hat more than it does otherwise… it's a very worthwhile program with respect to grooming the next generation of leaders for the institution." George embraced this concept: "Being a president is something I still continue to think about. I don't know if I'm ever going to want to do that, but certainly on my mind. The program really helped clarify for me that this is the path I need to be on.

Built Confidence, Promoted Self-Discovery, and Helped Define Specific Career Goals

Out of the 13 participants, 11 (84.6%) referenced how The Leadership Academy built

their confidence, promoted self-discovery, and helped to define specific career goals.

Kim said that: "The word that comes to mind is energized. It's a confidence thing. Knowing that

what I do have to add does add value." George wished to go beyond his current capacity at his

home community college, wanting "to have a greater impact on my college, wherever I happen

to be serving," while Susan said:

> It really kind of inspired me to keep going and it helped me also learn how to network even better. It gave me a different way to kind of search out what I was looking for and what I was interested in.

Karen confidently affirmed that "it reinforced a lot of behaviors… that was nice to go – I do

that! That's a good thing."

With regard to self-discovery and career goals, Cheryl said The Leadership Academy

helped her realize "I no longer want to be an administrator… I may be too introverted. I could

do that… but I also realized I'm pretty happy being in the classroom." Keisha had a similar take:

> It helped me kind of think of positions that I don't want to be in. Maybe the former desire to be a campus president… I don't want all of that hanging over me. That

responsibility. I want to mix and mingle and interact with the students a little bit more than that.

David took a more holistic approach to the topic, stating that it made him "think about career goals… and think about values…. for example, work-life balance and what that means for me compared to others."

Get Out What They Put In and Knowing What is Expected at the Executive Level

Out of the 13 interviewed, 10 (76.9%) reported that students get out of The Leadership Academy what they put in, get help toward career goals, and learn what is expected at the executive level by participating in The Leadership Academy. Darryl clarified his perspective when he said: "It helps people believe that there's more out there. You go to the table, and you leave really well nourished, or you don't." Pat had a less optimistic take on the benefits of participating:

> It's something that you need to do to have it on your resume… but it's a lot of time. The benefit time ration would not indicate that it's worth doing. It's every Friday for many weeks. It was quite a bit of everybody trying to convince each other how wonderful they were.

Karen explained the value of knowing what is expected at the executive level relative to a significant amount of change management underway at her institution: "We were singularly accredited colleges and we just in June became one. Big state of change… I want to be a part of it, because the reinventing of it is exciting to me." Keisha added that The Leadership Academy helped to fill in some gaps in certain participants' experiences: "What is it that our presidents or others who may be in that meeting… what is it that they are looking for? Where can we showcase the work that we have done?"

Getting Out of the Office

Eight of the 13 interview participants (61.5%) talked about how getting away from the office was a benefit to The Leadership Academy, although several shared Kim's sentiment that visiting the various campuses involved "a lot of driving." Karen stated: "I really enjoyed being able to get out of the office… back in the day (pre-pandemic) when we could actually travel."

Renewed Commitment to Learning

Seven of the 13 participants (53.8%) indicated that The Leadership Academy helped them foster a renewed commitment to learning. George elaborated by saying, "It helped me come to the realization that I need to apply for doctoral programs."

Karen described a less formal yet intentional approach. "There's always new techniques and new thoughts in the area… making it a priority."

GENERAL FINDINGS

Recommending The Leadership Academy

Of the 13 interview participants, 11 (61.5%) said they would recommend The Leadership Academy, while one participant (9.1%) said they would not. Another participant (9.1%) gave a more neutral answer to the question, as displayed in the table below.

Table 8: Would You Recommend The Leadership Academy?

PARTICIPANT	WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THE PROGRAM?
Kim	Yes, I would.
Enrique	Yes.
George	Yeah, absolutely!
Susan	Absolutely.
Karen	Oh, definitely. I so believe in it… the people who do it… the product they put out… what they put into it… you know, they love what they do, and it shows.

Participant	Would you recommend the program?
Cheryl	Yes and no. It was very much geared towards student services, which is not a bad thing at all. As someone in instruction… I think other professional development opportunities would probably be more relevant.
Keisha	Absolutely, yes.
David	Yes, definitely.
Darryl	Yeah, I would.
Pat	No. I did not find that I came away with practical skills. I was really excited about the day we were supposed to talk about budgeting. The speaker just talked about how lucky they were to have such a big budget and how they were able to build whatever they wanted to. They kept miss-defining the term zero-based budgeting.
Jeff	Yes.
Deb	Yeah. I have recommended it.
Walter	I'd recommend it.
	11 (84.6%) – Yes / 1 (9.1%) – No / 1 (9.1%) – Neutral

If You Could Change One Thing…

In the interview phase, participants were asked "If there was one thing you could change about The Leadership Academy, what would it be?" Responses varied from commenting about the length of the program and the book to changing the curriculum to be more targeted to participants at different stages of their careers. The researcher noted that most participants seemed apprehensive when saying anything negative about the program; however, they were still willing to give their opinion on how they might improve the experience for future cohorts.

Table 9: If There Was One Thing You Could Change About The Leadership Academy, What Would It Be?

Participant	If there was one thing you could change about The Leadership Academy, what would it be?
Kim	Maybe make it a two-day thing with less of the power through one day and more of a come stay the night and spread it over two days.
Enrique	Something that they had mentioned, but I never heard anything about it after it was mentioned was part two. Almost like an ongoing development plan.

Participant	If there was one thing you could change about The Leadership Academy, what would it be?
George	I remember not thinking very highly of the book… maybe they've addressed that.
Susan	I do not think the majority of people should be from your organization. My cohort was about two thirds from my same organization.
Karen	I think they were really trying to have an ongoing, kind of reunions or refreshers and I don't think that ever really took off.
Cheryl	I can read a chapter in the book. So, to go and sit and watch someone present a chapter to me… I would have liked something more substantial I guess.
Keisha	There was one group that we were in that I never met with them again as a group after the first day, yet it was my understanding that this was going to be one of our core groups that we worked with. So yeah, a little more organized.
David	It would be targeting your audience of your potential participants. So, it's less about the curriculum and more about saying… hey, this has the most benefit we've found from individuals that are in their first one to three years and then using that as an opportunity to really create some targeted recruitment opportunities to help build people earlier on.
Darryl	That big book. I'd get rid of that big book.
Pat	Make it skill based. Send people home with… this is how you write a board report. These are different kinds of budgets. Here are some hiring best practices… some tangible things.
Jeff	I don't know that I would necessarily have a lot of stuff to change.
Deb	I'm not saying a reunion, but a conference… they need to open it up to other classes and stuff like that.
Walter	It might be helpful to group people who are in similar parts of the college.

AACC Leadership Competencies

In the survey phase, participants were asked to rate themselves on the published

leadership competencies outlined by the American Association of Community Colleges in 2013

(see Table 10). Responses were collected using a Likert Scale ranging from 1 for Strongly

Disagree to 5 for Strongly Agree. The highest-rated competency was understanding the mission,

vision, and goals of the community college with a weighted average of 4.69, which rounds up to

a "Strongly Agree," whereas the lowest-rated AACC competency was understanding the skills

required for effective fundraising. Also, participant responses to this portion of the survey had a

weighted average of 4.09, which, when rounding down the weighted average, means that

participants "Agree" with the set of leadership competencies overall as they apply to them in

their current role.

Table 10: Participant Survey Weighted Averages: AACC Leadership Competencies

AACC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with these statements: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither Agree nor Disagree (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)	
I understand the mission, vision, and goals of community colleges, and how my role supports them.	4.69
I understand the culture of my institution and effectively perform my job duties successfully within the cultural constructs and framework that exists.	4.48
I have a forward-looking philosophy and am prepared for change.	4.50
I know my institution's strategies for improving student success and completion.	4.13
I provide exemplary customer service and make members of the community feel welcome.	4.74
I have an ongoing focus on process improvement for internal and external customers.	4.45
I understand the organizational structure of the community college, and the function that my department / unit plays in achieving institutional goals.	4.50
I understand the responsibilities of all employees within the organization.	3.44
I know my department / unit's budget.	3.85
Institutional fundraising is everyone's job.	3.29
I understand the skills required for effective fundraising.	3.18
I understand the institutional dashboard concept and how to interpret data to improve the student academic experience within my unit of the institution.	3.81
I understand the importance of time management and planning in my position.	4.60
I understand the organizational protocol at my institution: if I am unable to resolve a conflict, I understand how to appropriately have it addressed.	4.13
I am articulate and have strong presentation skills.	4.34
I could succinctly explain the mission, vision, and priorities of the institution.	4.13
I know the appropriate chain of command for communications.	4.32

AACC Leadership Competencies	Weighted Average
There can be realistic solutions to any institutional problem.	4.05
I understand the nuances of communications with various internal and external stakeholders.	3.95
I am familiar with what it means to be globally competent.	3.95
I am familiar with grassroots efforts to organize stakeholders to advocate for the community college mission.	3.53
I know the key stakeholders that are advocates for the institution, and the roles that they play in the community.	3.61
There are no lone rangers.	3.65
There is an interplay of public perception and policymaking that can impact college operations.	4.47
There are multiple government programs at the state and federal levels that contribute to the funding of a college's students and programs.	4.52
Overall Average	4.09

SUMMARY

The data presented in this chapter were collected from 64 online survey participants, with 13 having completed follow-up interviews with the researcher. The researcher followed a systematic process of coding and analyzing the data to organize the information into an Excel workbook that reflected the themes and relationships among the data, as presented in this chapter. Chapter Five will discuss the importance of the data themes presented, implications for cohort-based leadership development programs, and recommendations for further research and action.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Leadership structures help people and organizations overcome challenges, complete complex tasks, and resolve issues. There is no single way to effectively lead in our modern society; in reality, a multidimensional combination of leader cognition, cultural competencies, and collaborative modes of communication and decision making is usually applied. This is especially true in America's community colleges. These institutions face challenges from reductions in funding, the ever-changing needs of a diverse student body, and the impending retirements of many presidents, senior administrators, and faculty members. Thus, leadership development training opportunities must be accessible for current and aspiring community college leaders to properly serve their institutions in the foreseeable future.

The purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness of short-term cohort-based leadership training programs from the perspective of participants. While many leadership studies focus on senior managers and executive-level leadership, this study examined community college-specific or consortium-sponsored programs designed to grow leadership at various levels of this type of organization.

The researcher conducted this study using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. Surveys and in-depth interviews of cohort-based leadership program graduates were conducted to gather primary data on whether they developed or enhanced leadership skills and competencies resulting from

participation in the program. Specifically, this study was designed to understand (a) alumni conclusions regarding program effectiveness, (b) alumni conclusions regarding how the program components contributed to leadership skills development, (c) program execution of social and human capital development, (d) whether alums seek subsequently greater responsibility or higher positions within the organization and (e) the benefits for participants and sponsoring institutions.

In seeking to understand the topic, the study addressed the following questions: (1) How did participation in the cohort-based leadership training program contribute to skill development? (2) How did specific program components contribute to participants' growth as leaders? (3) What retention or promotional gains have occurred after participating? (4) What are the benefits of the program?

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The previous chapter presented the findings from the four research questions. Analysis of these findings helped the researcher draw several conclusions and recommendations for further action and research. The following is a discussion of these conclusions based on the findings from each research question while considering the literature reviewed during Chapter Two of this study.

First Research Question: Conclusions

The first research question examined how participation in The Leadership Academy led to skills development. Data relative to this first question indicate that participants expected to receive networking opportunities and exchange ideas with peers around the region that

fulfilled the social capital expectations of leadership training referenced in Chapter Two. It is the researcher's opinion that the program was able to meet or exceed those expectations for most all the participants. While not technically a skill, possessing a broader perspective of community college leadership is also a tool that helps employees to better understand their role and more effectively utilize their resources moving forward. Again, most of the participants expected this outcome and mentioned how this knowledge transfer helped build their skillset within the community college while clarifying how their roles fit into the college's strategic plan. Networks developed within the program can be relied upon to fill knowledge gaps and provide resources for alumni to better execute the community college mission for years to come.

Participants mentioned how the program often seemed less tactical and more strategic, with some within instructional roles recalling how the program fell short on more role-specific skills like instructional leadership and budgeting. These participants were nominated for the program by a previous alum or decided to attend because it seemed like the politically sound thing to do. While none of the participants regretted attending the program, their motives created some conflicting opinions of the program's relevance, alienated some, and precipitated reluctance from participants to recommend the program to others. The program emphasized social capital and human capital with a significant administrative and collaborative tilt. While the text was meant to offer a more skill-based leadership approach, it seemed to detract from the program's experiential leadership components within higher education. The text was not community college specific, which might account at least in part for the clear divide over

opinions of the text in the data for question two. Overall, these participants were critical of the program for lack of classroom focus.

The promotion of the program and recruitment processes are decisions made by the participant's home college, so unfulfilled expectations may imply that more adequate communications or marketing materials may be needed at participating colleges. A year-long program that involves travel, significant project work, and time away from the office can be a considerable commitment. Clearer expectations of what the program entails and more formal mentoring leading up to the program may avoid any lasting negative impressions by participants in future cohorts.

Second Research Question: Conclusions

The second research question sought to determine what specific components of The Leadership Academy contributed to participants' growth as leaders. As previously mentioned, participants expected to receive networking opportunities and exchange ideas with peers around the region. The diversity of participants from the 14 participating institutions to network and share was an aspect that the program participants viewed positively. However, some institutions had multiple campuses participating and were much larger than others. Participant numbers could be capped by institution size and specific organizational roles prioritized for each cohort. For example, there were no alumni captured in this survey who came from facilities, campus security, dining services, technical support staff, nor business services. An intentional approach to recruit from those groups not represented in this study could bring different perspectives, which ultimately may lead to added leadership growth.

The research data for this question shows that the time spent with presidents was also a significant highlight for participants. Recognizing that presidents are complex people capable of mistakes built a greater understanding between participants and the executive level. Physically visiting the campuses, seeing the strengths and weaknesses of each approach to the community college mission, and hearing why certain decisions were made proved very powerful for participants. However, this opportunity also laid bare the gravity of leadership at the highest level of the community college and helped participants test their ambitions and further solidify career goals. Participants either felt rejuvenated, convinced an executive role lies ahead, or gained a greater respect for someone else who is willing to take on such a heavy responsibility. Regardless of the outcome, participants developed an overall understanding of how to become a more engaged on-campus leader from any position.

Participants also emphasized their intentions to be more accountable and decisive following The Leadership Academy. While it was mentioned explicitly in some interviews, other themes of increased use of appropriate language in leadership, improved critical thinking strategies, and exhibiting resilience through change were interwoven with some personal descriptions of heightened awareness of accountability and the importance of decisiveness in their daily work. These examples were directly attributed to participation in The Leadership Academy.

Third Research Question: Conclusions

The third research question sought to discover what retention or promotional gains had occurred among alumni of The Leadership Academy. The researcher expected to find that the majority of participants might realize promotional gains; however, data show that succession

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planning and promotional outcomes may be a much longer process. Just over half of those

surveyed and less than one-third of those interviewed reported that they had been promoted

since The Leadership Academy. While various factors could contribute to these results, based

on the conclusions of Research Question 1, many of the participants are aspiring leaders who

used The Leadership Academy experience to bring their career plan into focus. Two interview

participants indicated that The Leadership Academy should have come along much earlier in

their careers and suggested the program find more ways to target high potential employees

who are newer to their organizations. Nevertheless, the data show that it may take several

years for many alumni to fully execute the plan and reach their defined career goals. In the

meantime, all but one of the participants interviewed took additional responsibilities on their

campuses following The Leadership Academy, seeking out tasks and committees beyond their

day-to-day roles.

The Leadership Academy is driving engagement and role clarity for those seeking

promotional opportunities that may not be available quite yet. By helping participants finding

new connections and ways to serve the campus, the cohort-based leadership development

program cultivates and retains talent while campuses benefit from the expanded work effort

and learning of the participants.

Fourth Research Question: Conclusions

The fourth research question explored the benefits of The Leadership Academy. The

surveys and interviews revealed that this type of professional development is essential for

employee groups to build overall confidence in their abilities to gain support on their journey

toward career goals. This theme kept appearing throughout the research data, including the

survey assessment compared to the AACC leadership competencies. Participants felt they had to "get out of it what they put into it" and found it important to be seen as capable in their abilities related to executive challenges or high-impact situations. Participants viewed as significant outcomes of the program recognition from not only completing the program but also presenting their projects in support of the campus mission.

The research also revealed a desire for participants to be a part of something bigger than their current role, whether it was joining an extensive network of alumni resources for the future or thinking like an executive to better understand the "bigger picture." Participants appreciated that their institutions were investing in them and recognized that this opportunity could lead to something greater, even if that something does not materialize into a formal promotion right away. This investment should foster goodwill and collaboration within the employment relationship while building the basis for enduring trust for any changes that might need to be made down the line. For those tracking for potential executive roles, this type of training often develops into mentoring relationships and a renewed commitment to ongoing learning, whether at upcoming conferences or through the pursuit of additional graduate studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

The researcher offers the following recommendations based on the findings, analysis, and conclusions of this study:

- Standardize the program's marketing and recruitment process across all campuses to ensure participants have a better understanding of what to expect prior to starting the program.

- Restrict participation by any one population or campus to stimulate diversity of thought and ensure one population does not dominate cohorts.

- Offer additional training to more targeted populations, both administrative and instructionally focused, to specifically develop role-specific leadership earlier in a participant's career. Using the AACC Leadership Competency survey to identify priority knowledge gaps training topics could include understanding individual functional and advocacy roles across the organization, like marketing or fundraising, and identifying key stakeholders of the community college.

This study demonstrated how employees across the spectrum can engage with their campus and play a leading role in supporting the campus mission. It also revealed a tendency for community colleges to emphasize administration and executive leadership over other crucial employee groups that may lead from the middle or fringe of the organization. However, giving all employees the chance to better understand how executive decisions are made and gain confidence in their personal contributions to the college mission seems to support this type of higher-level curriculum in The Leadership Academy. One way that the program can help participants keep an open mind to this type of training is by standardizing the program's marketing and recruitment process across all campuses. It should also lead to a better understanding of what to expect from cohort programs like The Leadership Academy and how to properly prepare for this additional work commitment.

In addition, limiting participation by any one employee population or campus to stimulate consistent diversity of background and thought within cohorts is a worthwhile adjustment. For example, the researcher studied several Leadership Academy cohorts dominated by two larger community college systems with multiple campuses. Providing parameters for these campuses to send participants and encouraging smaller campuses to fill

the remaining openings could serve to augment the experience for all involved and give smaller campuses a more representative voice on regional issues.

Finally, The Leadership Academy and other leadership development programs should consider additional training opportunities for alumni and other role-specific offerings for employees early in their careers. The research shows that the program prompted participants to reflect on their career goals and the level of ambition they genuinely have when considering future options within the organization. This clarity might lead to a renewed commitment to learning and additional professional development opportunities that the consortium might be best suited to facilitate in another cohort-based model. The interviews included effective budgeting, preparing a report for the Board of Trustees, or instructional leadership comparisons as possible topics.

The researcher believes that these recommendations for action positively impact the participating institutions and The Leadership Academy, which in turn will positively impact future participants in this type of cohort-based leadership development model.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The results of this study open up further opportunities for research focused on cohort-based leadership training programs conducted for community college employees. The researcher utilized surveys and interviews during this study and engaged participants from a regional consortium that runs the program. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on institutional participation factors, the researcher chose to concentrate on The Leadership Academy. These alumni were the only group to receive the survey and participate in interviews. It is important to develop a more thorough understanding of these programs of

varying sizes, institutions, and design, so the researcher believes that additional research should be conducted to explore this topic more fully. Studying similar programs built around specific institutional and regional leadership training needs could provide a more holistic view of how these programs impact the community college landscape.

Additionally, the researcher recommends further research focused on professional development and training program participants before and after the training. For example, it would be helpful to compare AACC leadership competency weighted averages before and after participating in the program and collect user responses at a point where the training components are most fresh in their minds.

CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this study was to explore the effectiveness of short-term cohort-based leadership training programs from the perspective of participants. As the literature suggests for effective leadership training, cohort-based leadership development training programs deliver on both social and human capital development, albeit with an emphasis on community college administration and executive roles. While minor adjustments could target specific populations of participants and improve the relevance of the curriculum to diverse leaders at all levels of the college, programs like The Leadership Academy fulfill their mission. They broaden employee perspectives and build confidence in employee relationships, capabilities, and collaborative improvements across the representative campuses involved.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

The researcher's professional development journey over the past 17 years of working in higher education served as inspiration for this study. He began his higher education career as an online admissions advisor at a large university and utilized the extensive professional development offerings to further his career in that environment. Ultimately, he became a director of admissions, supervising a team of over forty advisors and support staff. Once he transitioned to the community college environment and personally attended an institutional cohort-based leadership training program, he became fascinated by the differences in approach compared to his past university's professional development experience. The executive and administrative emphasis based on AACC guidance for these types of programs and the national call for an executive-level leadership pipeline in the community college made this topic seem worthwhile, as little research of this kind had been done. The researcher wanted to explore the effectiveness of these prevalent community college cohort-based leadership training models in-depth. This dissertation is intended to provide needed feedback to program designers and future leaders that have the potential to shape community college students and campuses for years to come.

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APPENDIX A: EMAIL TO PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Subject: Request for Participation in Research Study

Good Afternoon,

My name is Joseph Loobey and I am a doctoral student studying community college leadership at Ferris State University. I am working on my dissertation, which focuses on the participant experience and outcomes related to cohort-based leadership training models. I understand that your institutions have such a program in The Leadership Academy. I am requesting your help with the research portion of my study. I believe that a better understanding of the overall experience and related outcomes of cohort-based leadership development programs will help to determine an institution's return on investment for such programs. This research could provide your institution with valuable feedback regarding this training practice, which can assist with future programmatic changes and curriculum design.

Specifically, this study is designed to understand: (a) alumni conclusions regarding program effectiveness, (b) alumni conclusions regarding how the program components contributed to leadership skills development, (c) how the program planned and executed social and human capital development, (d) how many alums have retained and sought higher positions within the organization, and (e) what is the benefit for participants and sponsoring community colleges.

To accomplish this, I am interested in acquiring a list of The Leadership Academy program participants over the past 5 years to contact them via email for participation in the study. I am also seeking your assistance to determine specific participant employment information at the college to help put their program involvement and any survey responses from this study into context. Specifically, I would like to determine the nature of each participants' position at the college, time in position, and if internal promotion opportunities were sought and attained.

I would really appreciate your participation and the chance to help improve your institutional leadership training resources. I hope to collect institutional data in the coming weeks and begin contacting individual participants ***no later than March 9th.*** All responses and information provided will remain anonymous.

I have attached some supporting documentation and links for your consideration.

- **Research Plan**
  - This document outlines the details and methods used in the study

- **Online Survey**
  - This document contains a transcript of the questions asked in the initial online survey.

- **Interview Script**
  - This document contains a transcript of the questions asked in the interview portion of the study.

- **Ferris State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Documentation**
  - This study does not meet the federal requirements for human subject research and should not require additional IRB approval to move forward.

I would be happy to address any questions or concerns.

You may call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX or email me at XXXXXX@ferris.edu.

Thank you in advance and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Joseph Loobey
Ferris State University Doctoral Student

APPENDIX B: EMAIL TO PROGRAM PARTICIPANT CONTACT LIST

Dear _____,

My name is Joseph Loobey, a doctoral student at Ferris State University. I am preparing to conduct my dissertation research and would appreciate your help.

I am interested in your prior experiences as a cohort member of The Leadership Academy leadership development program. To learn more, I am asking you to complete a short questionnaire (about 5 minutes) answering questions about your overall experience with program. https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KR6DLWP

The survey will not ask for your name, and your answers cannot be linked to your college email address. Of course, this is voluntary, and you are not in any way obligated to participate in this study.

I would really appreciate your participation, and I am looking forward to learning more about your experiences. As a token of appreciation for those who respond, I will be holding a random drawing for a $25 gift certificate. You will have the option to enter your email address into the drawing at the end of the survey – again, any email address you provide will not be linked to your survey responses. The survey will close on March 30, 2021 and a winner will be selected and notified at that time.

In addition, you will be given an option to participate in a 30–45-minute video interview to discuss your leadership development experience in-depth. Participants selected will each receive an additional $40 gift certificate for their time. Interviews will be scheduled individually at a time convenient for both the researcher and participant via online video conference.

All responses and information provided will be anonymous and no one at your institution will know whether you participate or not.

If you have any questions, there are two ways that you can reach me. You may call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX or send an email to XXXXXX@ferris.edu. If you would prefer that I communicate with you using your personal email address (as opposed to your college address), please reach me using one of the communication methods listed above.

Sincerely,

Joseph Loobey

Doctoral Student - Ferris State University
Doctorate of Community College Leadership

APPENDIX C: ONLINE SURVEY

Online Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study!

I appreciate your interest and your time.

This survey should take approximately 5 minutes to complete. If you would like to be included in the drawing for a $25 Amazon gift card, please remember to include your email address at the end of the survey. Your email information will be kept separate from your responses to the survey questions, which will remain anonymous.

Before you continue, please read the following information.

The purpose of this study is to explore the effectiveness of cohort-based leadership training programs from the perspective of participants and the sponsoring community colleges.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. There are no known risks associated with this study.

Specifically, this study is designed to understand: (a) alumni conclusions regarding program effectiveness, (b) alumni conclusions regarding how the program components contributed to leadership skills development, (c) how the program planned and executed social and human capital development, (d) how many alums have retained and sought higher positions within the organization, and (e) what is the benefit for participants and sponsoring community colleges.

By continuing and completing this electronic survey, you are indicating your understanding of the above information. If you have any questions about the study, you may contact the researcher (Joseph Loobey), the study's faculty advisor or the IRB office (IRB@ferris.edu). You may wish to print a copy of this page for your records.

Click the Next button below to continue.

Question 1

To which gender do you most identify?

- ( ) Female
- ( ) Male
- ( ) Gender Variant / Non-Conforming
- ( ) Prefer Not to Answer
- ( ) Not Listed

  [   ]

Question 2

What is your age?

- ( ) 18 to 24
- ( ) 25 to 34
- ( ) 35 to 44
- ( ) 45 to 54
- ( ) 55 to 64
- ( ) 65 or older

Question 3

Are you of Spanish, Hispanic or Latino origin or descent?

- ( ) Yes   ( ) No

How would you describe yourself?

- [ ] White or Caucasian
- [ ] Black or African American
- [ ] Hispanic or Latino
- [ ] Asian or Asian American
- [ ] American Indian or Alaska Native
- [ ] Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- [ ] Another Race

  [   ]

Question 4

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

○ Less than high school degree

○ High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)

○ Some college but no degree

○ Associate degree

○ Bachelor degree

○ Graduate degree

Question 5

What is your total household income?

○ Less than $20,000

○ $20,000 to $34,999

○ $35,000 to $49,999

○ $50,000 to $74,999

○ $75,000 to $99,999

○ $100,000 to $149,999

○ $150,000 or More

Question 6

Indicate how long (in years) you have been employed in higher education:

○ Less than one year

○ Between 1 and 5 years

○ Between 5 and 10 years

○ Between 10 and 20 years

○ Longer than 20 years

Question 7

Which of the following categories best describes your job?

○ Administrative Assistant

○ Student Services staff, including: Admissions/Enrollment, Advising/Counseling, Testing/Assessment, Financial Aid, Library, Bookstore, Tutoring, Student Life, Veteran's Services, and Job Placement

○ Faculty

○ Instructional Support, such as Program and Lab Assistants

○ Facilities, Grounds, and Maintenance employees

○ Campus Security

○ Dining Services

○ Technical Support staff, such as Media Services and IT

○ Business Services, including Accounting, Mailroom, and Printing

○ Other (please specify)

Question 8

Have you attended the [ ] cohort-based leadership training program?

○ Yes

○ No

If you answered yes to the previous question, please indicate what year that you attended.

Year

Question 9

How long have you been in your current position?

○ Less than two years

○ Between 2 and 5 years

○ Between 5 and 10 years

○ Between 10 and 20 years

○ Longer than 20 years

Question 10

Have you sought a new position or additional responsibility since attending the cohort-based leadership development training?

○ Yes

○ No

Question 11

Have you advanced to a higher position since attending the cohort-based leadership development training?

○ Yes

○ No

Questions 12 – 14

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with these statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I understand the mission, vision, and goals of community colleges, and how my role supports them.	○	○	○	○	○
I understand the culture of my institution and effectively perform my job duties successfully within the cultural constructs and framework that exists.	○	○	○	○	○
I have a forward-looking philosophy and am prepared for change.	○	○	○	○	○

Questions 15 – 18
Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I know my institution's strategies for improving student success and completion.	○	○	○	○	○
I provide exemplary customer service and make members of the community feel welcome.	○	○	○	○	○
I have an ongoing focus on process improvement for internal and external customers.	○	○	○	○	○
I understand the organizational structure of the community college, and the function that my department / unit plays in achieving institutional goals.	○	○	○	○	○

Questions 19 – 22
Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I understand the responsibilities of all employees within the organization.	○	○	○	○	○
I know my department / unit's budget.	○	○	○	○	○
Institutional fundraising is everyone's job.	○	○	○	○	○
I understand the skills required for effective fundraising.	○	○	○	○	○

Questions 23 – 26
Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I understand the institutional dashboard concept and how to interpret data to improve the student academic experience within my unit of the institution.	○	○	○	○	○
I understand the importance of time management and planning in my position.	○	○	○	○	○
I understand the organizational protocol at my institution: if I am unable to resolve a conflict, I understand how to appropriately have it addressed.	○	○	○	○	○
I am articulate and have strong presentation skills.	○	○	○	○	○

Questions 27 – 30
Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I could succinctly explain the mission, vision, and priorities of the institution.	○	○	○	○	○
I know the appropriate chain of command for communications.	○	○	○	○	○
There can be realistic solutions to any institutional problem.	○	○	○	○	○
I understand the nuances of communications with various internal and external stakeholders.	○	○	○	○	○

Questions 31 – 33

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am familiar with what it means to be globally competent.	○	○	○	○	○
I am familiar with grassroots efforts to organize stakeholders to advocate for the community college mission.	○	○	○	○	○
I know the key stakeholders that are advocates for the institution, and the roles that they play in the community.	○	○	○	○	○

Questions 34 – 36

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
There are no lone rangers.	○	○	○	○	○
There is an interplay of public perception and policymaking that can impact college operations.	○	○	○	○	○
There are multiple government programs at the state and federal levels that contribute to the funding of a college's students and programs.	○	○	○	○	○

Question 37

If you are selected to participate in a follow-up interview, you would receive an additional $40 Amazon gift card for your time and cooperation.

Would you be willing to discuss this topic further?

○ Yes   ○ No

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Question 38

Thank you for your willingness to discuss the topic further.

Please complete the fields below.

Name	
Current Institution	
Best Contact Email	
Best Contact Phone #	

If selected, the researcher will contact you to schedule next steps.

Question 39

Thank you for completing this survey!

Please enter your email address for chance to win a $25 Amazon gift card.
Your email information will be kept separate from your responses to the survey questions, which will remain anonymous.

Email Address	

The winner will be determined by random drawing after all surveys are collected (expected date: April 30, 2021).

The winner will be notified via email immediately following the drawing.

If you are not interested, please leave the email address field blank before clicking the **Done** button below.

APPENDIX D: EMAIL INVITATION TO INTERVIEW

Subject: Leadership Development Research Study - Interview Request and Scheduling

Thank you for recently completing the online survey portion of my study:

> "An Examination of Cohort-Based Leadership Development Programs in United States
> Community Colleges"

You've indicated a willingness to participate in a brief interview 30-45 minute video interview to discuss your leadership development program experience in-depth. Participants will each receive a $40 Amazon gift certificate for their time.

Interviews are scheduled here:

> https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0A4AAEA829ABF94

All responses and information provided will be anonymous and no one at your institution will know whether you participate or not. A copy of the informed consent disclosure is attached to this email.

If you have any questions, there are two ways that you can reach me. You may call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX or send an email to XXXXX@ferris.edu.

Talk to you soon.

Sincerely,

Joseph Loobey

Doctoral Student
Ferris State University

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW

INFORMED CONSENT FORM - INTERVIEWS

Project Title: An Examination of Cohort-based Leadership Development Programs in United States Community Colleges

Principal Investigator: Joseph Loobey_Email: xxxxx@ferris.edu   Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX

Faculty Advisor: Sandra Balkema__Email: xxxxxxxx@ferris.edu

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to explore the effectiveness of cohort-based leadership training programs from the perspective of participants and the sponsoring community colleges.

PARTICIPATION

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary.

You are eligible to participate in this study because you are an alumnus of a cohort-based community college leadership development program.

If you agree to be part of this study, you will be asked a series of questions in a survey related to your work experiences, the cohort-based leadership training experience and outcomes of participating in such a program.

POTENTIAL RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

There are no known risks associated with this study.

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS

The researcher believes that a better understanding of the overall experience and related outcomes of cohort-based leadership development programs will help to determine if such programs are worth the investment. This research could also provide feedback regarding this training practice, which can assist community colleges with programmatic changes and curriculum design. Specifically, this study is designed to understand: (a) alumni conclusions regarding program effectiveness, (b) alumni conclusions regarding how the program components contributed to leadership skills development, (c) how the program planned and executed social and human capital development, (d) how many alums have retained and sought higher positions within the organization, and (e) what is the benefit for participants and sponsoring community colleges.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Signing up for an interview gives the researchers your permission to obtain, use and share information about you for this study. The results of this study could be published in an article, but would not include any information that would identify you. There are some reasons why people other than the researchers may need to see the information you provided as part of the study. This includes organizations responsible for making sure the research is conducted safely and properly, including Ferris State University.

In order to keep your information safe, the researchers will protect your anonymity and maintain your confidentiality. The data you provide will be stored in a locked file. The researchers will retain the data for 3 years after which time the researchers will dispose of your data by standard state of the art methods for secure disposal. The data will not be made available to other researchers for other studies following the completion of this research study.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The main researcher conducting this study is Joseph Loobey, a doctoral student at Ferris State University. If you have any questions you may email him at loobeyj@ferris.edu or call 847-925-6058.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a subject in this study, please contact: Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants, 220 Ferris Drive, PHR 308, Big Rapids, MI 49307, (231) 591-2553, IRB@ferris.edu.

Acknowledgement

Research Subject: By registering for an interview, I acknowledge understand the information printed on this form. I understand that if I have more questions or concerns about the study or my participation as a research subject, I may contact the people listed above in the "Contact Information" section. I understand that I may make a copy of this form. I understand that if my ability to consent for myself changes, either I or my legal representative may be asked to re-consent prior to my continued participation.

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Interview Script

1. When you originally applied for the _____ cohort-based leadership development program, what did you hope to gain from it?

2. As you reflect on your time in the program, which activities, seminars or projects contributed most to your development as a leader?

3. Possible follow-up as needed:
   How did that part of the program contribute to your development?

4. What can you now do, or do better, as a result of participating in the _____ cohort-based leadership development program?

5. Possible follow-up as needed: What program concept(s) have you been able to apply? What result(s) have you achieved?

6. Suppose a newly selected participant in an upcoming cohort asked you about the program. How would you explain it to them?

7. Possible follow-up as needed: Would you recommend it?

8. As a result, of your participation in the _____ program has your perception of leader or leadership changed? If so, how did it change?

9. In your own words, please tell me what leader or leadership skills or competencies you believe were developed or enhanced as a result of participation in this program.

10. What has been the effect of your participation in the program on your department?

11. What has been the effect of your participation in the program for you personally?

12. How has your participation in the program prepared you for leader or leadership roles or positions?

13. Tell me about a promotion you have earned or if you have been given more responsibility since your participation?

14. Possible follow-up as needed: Do you attribute this promotion or increase in responsibility in your leader or leadership skills and competencies from your participation in the program? Why or why not?

15. Is there a particular leadership role or career aspiration that you have identified or are currently working toward?

16. Possible follow up as needed: Did this program influence your decision-making process in this regard or help your find direction? If so, how?

17. Please tell me about any unexpected outcomes that you can attribute to your participation in the program.

18. How has your leadership development been supported after participating in the program? (Either by the program itself or by your department)

19. What do you think things would be like for you today if you had never participated in the _____ cohort-based leadership development program?

20. If there was one thing you could change about the _____ cohort-based leadership development program, what would it be?

21. Is there anything else related to your experiences in the program that you feel is important to mention or might have been overlooked?

Thank you.

May I contact you again to ask any additional questions if necessary?

APPENDIX G: SURVEY RESPONSES

To which gender do you most identify?

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Responses
Female	68.75%	44
Male	29.69%	19
Gender Variant / Non-Conforming	0.00%	0
Prefer Not to Answer	1.56%	1
Not Listed	0.00%	0
	Answered	64
	Skipped	0

What is your age?

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Responses
18 to 24	0.00%	0
25 to 34	3.13%	2
35 to 44	40.63%	26
45 to 54	37.50%	24
55 to 64	17.19%	11
65 or older	1.56%	1
	Answered	64
	Skipped	0

Are you of Spanish, Hispanic or Latino origin or descent?

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Responses
Yes	7.81%	5
No	92.19%	59
	Answered	64
	Skipped	0

How would you describe yourself?

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Responses
White or Caucasian	65.63%	42
Black or African American	26.56%	17
Hispanic or Latino	7.81%	5
Asian or Asian American	0.00%	0
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.56%	1

	Response Percentage	Responses
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.00%	0
Another Race	0.00%	0
Answered		64
Skipped		0

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Responses
Less than high school degree	0.00%	0
High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)	0.00%	0
Some college but no degree	0.00%	0
Associate degree	0.00%	0
Bachelor's degree	4.69%	3
Graduate degree	95.31%	61
Answered		64
Skipped		0

What is your total household income?

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Responses
Less than $20,000	0.00%	0
$20,000 to $34,999	0.00%	0
$35,000 to $49,999	1.59%	1
$50,000 to $74,999	17.46%	11
$75,000 to $99,999	22.22%	14
$100,000 to $149,999	26.98%	17
$150,000 or More	31.75%	20
Answered		63
Skipped		1

Indicate how long (in years) you have been employed in higher education:

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Responses
Less than one year	0.00%	0
Between 1 and 5 years	3.17%	2
Between 5 and 10 years	15.87%	10

Between 10 and 20 years	61.90%	39
Longer than 20 years	19.05%	12
	Answered	63
	Skipped	1

Which of the following categories best describes your job?

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Responses
Administrative Assistant	1.59%	1
Student Services staff, including: Admissions/Enrollment, Advising/Counseling, Testing/Assessment, Financial Aid, Library, Bookstore, Tutoring, Student Life, Veteran Services, and Job Placement	33.33%	21
Faculty	34.92%	22
Instructional Support, such as Program and Lab Assistants	1.59%	1
Facilities, Grounds, and Maintenance employees	0.00%	0
Campus Security	0.00%	0
Dining Services	0.00%	0
Technical Support staff, such as Media Services and IT	0.00%	0
Business Services, including Accounting, Mailroom, and Printing	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	28.57%	18
Marketing, Academic Affairs, Administration, HR, Institutional Research, Advancement, Campus Director, Continuing Education, Grant Development, Academic Support Services, Learning, and Organizational Development	Answered	63
	Skipped	1

Have you attended the _____ cohort-based leadership training program?

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Responses
Yes	100.00%	62
No	0.00%	0
	Answered	62
	Skipped	2

If you answered yes to the previous question, please indicate what year you attended.

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Responses
2014	8.33%	5
2015	8.33%	5
2016	20.00%	12

2017	26.67%	16
2018	23.33%	14
2019	13.33%	8
	Answered	60
	Skipped	4

How long have you been in your current position?

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Responses
Less than two years	14.52%	9
Between 2 and 5 years	37.10%	23
Between 5 and 10 years	29.03%	18
Between 10 and 20 years	17.74%	11
Longer than 20 years	1.61%	1
	Answered	62
	Skipped	2

Have you sought a new position or additional responsibility since attending the cohort-based leadership development training?

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Responses
Yes	72.58%	45
No	27.42%	17
	Answered	62
	Skipped	2

Have you advanced to a higher position since attending the cohort-based leadership development training?

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Responses
Yes	53.33%	24
No	46.67%	21
	Answered	45
	Skipped	19

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with these statements.							
Answer Choices	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Total	Weighted Average (1-5 scale)

Answer Choices	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Total	Weighted Average (1-5 scale)
I understand the mission, vision, and goals of community colleges, and how my role supports them.	0	0	1	17	44	62	4.69
I understand the culture of my institution and effectively perform my job duties successfully within the cultural constructs and framework that exists.	0	0	3	26	33	62	4.48
I have a forward-looking philosophy and am prepared for change.	0	1	2	24	35	62	4.5

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with these statements.							
Answer Choices	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Total	Weighted Average (1-5 scale)
I know my institution's strategies for improving student success and completion.	0	2	7	34	19	62	4.13
I provide exemplary customer service and make members of the community feel welcome.	0	0	0	16	46	62	4.74
I have an ongoing focus on process improvement for internal and external customers.	0	1	3	25	33	62	4.45
I understand the organizational structure of the community college, and the function that my department / unit plays in achieving institutional goals.	1	0	1	25	35	62	4.5
I understand the responsibilities of all employees within the organization.	2	12	14	25	9	62	3.44

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with these statements.							
Answer Choices	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Total	Weighted Average (1-5 Scale)
I know my department / unit's budget.	8	6	1	19	28	62	3.85

Answer Choices	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Total	Weighted Average (1-5 Scale)
Institutional fundraising is everyone's job.	6	12	11	24	9	62	3.29
I understand the skills required for effective fundraising.	4	15	16	20	7	62	3.18
I understand the institutional dashboard concept and how to interpret data to improve the student academic experience within my unit of the institution.	2	4	8	38	10	62	3.81
I understand the importance of time management and planning in my position.	0	0	1	23	38	62	4.6

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with these statements.							
Answer Choices	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Total	Weighted Average (1-5 Scale)
I understand the organizational protocol at my institution: if I am unable to resolve a conflict, I understand how to appropriately have it addressed.	2	2	2	36	20	62	4.13
I am articulate and have strong presentation skills.	0	0	7	27	28	62	4.34
I could succinctly explain the mission, vision, and priorities of the institution.	1	0	5	40	16	62	4.13
I know the appropriate chain of command for communications.	2	0	3	28	29	62	4.32
There can be realistic solutions to any institutional problem.	0	4	7	33	18	62	4.05

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with these statements.							
Answer Choices	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Total	Weighted Average (1-5 Scale)
I understand the nuances of communications with various internal and external stakeholders.	2	3	6	36	15	62	3.95
I am familiar with what it means to be globally competent.	1	3	8	36	14	62	3.95

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Total	Weighted Average (1-5 Scale)
I am familiar with grassroots efforts to organize stakeholders to advocate for the community college mission.	1	13	8	32	8	62	3.53
I know the key stakeholders that are advocates for the institution, and the roles that they play in the community.	1	12	8	30	11	62	3.61
There are no lone rangers.	2	9	13	23	15	62	3.65

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with these statements.							
Answer Choices	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Total	Weighted Average (1-5 Scale)
There is an interplay of public perception and policymaking that can impact college operations.	0	0	0	33	29	62	4.47
There are multiple government programs at the state and federal levels that contribute to the funding of a college's students and programs.	0	0	1	28	33	62	4.52
					Answered		62
					Skipped		2

If you are selected to participate in a follow-up interview, you would receive an additional $40 Amazon gift card for your time and cooperation.

Would you be willing to discuss this topic further?

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Responses
Yes	46.77%	29
No	53.23%	33
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
	Answered	62
	Skipped	2

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEWS CODED BY THEME

1. How did participation in the cohort-based leadership training program contribute to skill development?

Participant	Shared Processes and Best Practices (SD1)	Broadened Institutional Leadership Perspective (SD2)	Improved Critical Thinking Strategies (SD3)	Rigor Similar to Graduate Coursework (SD4)	Improved Networking Skills (SD5)	Resilience Through Change (SD6)	Improved Research and Project Management (SD7)	Recognized Accountability and Decisiveness of Leaders (SD8)	Improved Use of Language in Leadership (SD9)
Kim	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Enrique	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
George	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Susan		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Karen	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cheryl	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
Keisha	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
David	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Darryl	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
Pat	X	X			X		X	X	X
Jeff	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Deb	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Walter	X	X	X		X	X		X	X
Total	12 92.3%	13 100%	11 84.6%	6 46.2%	13 100%	11 84.6%	12 92.3%	12 92.3%	12 92.3%

Interview quotes to support:
- "The program helped me look at things in a more strategic way."

- "I had not had the experience or the exposure to that more upper executive level leadership, or what it takes to manage and balance so many different constituencies, so it just broadened my perspective."

- "An awareness of the constant presence of organizational politics and then how to navigate those politics in a positive and productive way."

- "There's a way to be leaders at whatever you are doing and at whatever position you are."

- "I have a better understanding of community college leadership because my background was in four-year… institutions are very different from my experience."

- "The same leadership approach doesn't work for every situation. If I were in an upper-level leadership position, how would I have managed that?"

- "I got to know a lot of people… and built some of those relationships that I wouldn't have had otherwise."

- "Definitely networking… (program coordinator) always makes you talk to everybody. She has very good facilitation skills."

- "To run a community college is totally grassroots. What those presidents of the campus are doing… they're doing grassroots campaigning is what they're doing."

- "Having people know my abilities outside of my department, I think was really beneficial."

- "To learn from folks who are doing good work in other places."

- "I learned that in some instances… it's okay to pause and to research and to gather my thoughts… to really not be paralyzed in the research phase, feeling that I don't know enough to make a move."

- "In a leadership position… you take all aspects and sides into consideration, but at some point, you have to make a decision… sometimes quickly… to have the guts to stand behind it and take the heat sometimes."

- "It is being mindful of the impact over intentions. And as a leader, it's not simply about having good intentions. You have to think about the impact that you're having."

- "Thinking about your audience… and what message is going to resonate with each one of your particular audiences… without losing saliency… and the purpose of your message."

- "We started being more intentional about how we create consistency in the language of our programs, to where students can see a thread throughout… more of a scaffold approach."

- "It's helped me in terms of the communications… there are certain times throughout the year where… you don't want to go disrupt the registrar or financial aid office… that insight has helped me in terms of some of the timing of when we plan communications to the college."

- "When you can temper that communication in a way that makes people feel important and a part of and encouraged and nurtured. You're going to get a lot more done but you're also developing that relationship."

- "It made me less scared to talk to a president. The more you can learn to think like a president does, the better you can help a president."

- "Thinking about important issues through multiple lenses… and making it a part of your decision making."

- "Leadership can sometimes seem really abstract… so to be able to apply it so practically (in the project) and see results… feels like you're using it as opposed to just trying to remember to say things in a particular way sometime in the future."

- "There's a curriculum to it. It's just like taking a graduate class."

- "You can get a certain amount of grad credit… so that was an added incentive for me."

- "It reinforced the importance and the value of that mid-level position and being that conduit between the strategic work of an organization or institution and the day-to-day work… to make that transformational strategic work a reality."

- "If you're going to lead a department, you need to understand the other departments around you and how there's an interaction. If you don't understand the perspective, it's really impossible to figure out how to put the puzzle together so that it all fits."

- "Because of that darn project… I was like… shoot… I can go back to get my master's degree. I can do that. I'd be fine."

- "A good leader needs to be flexible because honestly the team changes a lot. You don't always have the same group of people surrounding you."

2. How did specific program components contribute to participant growth as leaders?

Participant	Hearing Leadership Perspectives from Presenters (LG1)	Visiting Campus Facilities: Sizes, Structures and Dynamics (LG2)	Required Reading – Positive Reaction (LG3)	Required Reading – Negative Reaction (LG4)	Diverse Participants and Presenters: College, Career Level and Background (LG5)	Project Work Beyond Day-to-Day Role (LG6)	Presentation of Project at Conference (LG7)	Emphasis on Administration and Academic Affairs (LG8)
Kim	X	X	X		X	X		X
Enrique	X				X	X		
George	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Susan	X	X			X	X	X	
Karen		X	X		X			
Cheryl	X	X		X			X	X
Keisha	X	X			X	X	X	
David			X		X	X		X
Darryl		X		X				
Pat	X	X				X	X	X
Jeff	X	X			X	X	X	
Deb	X	X			X	X	X	X
Walter	X		X		X			
Total	10 76.9%	10 76.9%	4 30.8%	3 23.1%	10 76.9%	9 69.2%	7 53.8%	6 46.2%

Interview quotes to support:
- "Understanding that… they are real people who had boots on the ground."

- "Getting to see other presidents who had doors open for them too… maybe didn't wake up one day and decide I'm going to be president."

- "It helped me realize that… lots of different kinds of people can become a community college president and that was pretty cool."

- "Case studies had more to do with the academic affairs side."

- "Connections with peers across the state."

- "This gave me an opportunity to go to like eight or nine different colleges around the region and find out about them."

- "The book was really good for the first two to three chapters and then it became very repetitive."

- "A really good book… it was a practical guide to leadership… of do's and don'ts."

- "I gained a clearer understanding of what a lot of student services folks do."

- "It's meant to be a resource, if you're interested in maybe going into administration or maybe taking on another role outside of your current one."

- "As someone in instruction… I think other professional development opportunities would be more relevant."

- "I wasn't crazy about the book."

- "My project for the program was a symposium that is now an annual event that we host for our campus."

- "We were invited back to attend some of the later conferences the next year and I even presented at one."

- "We were divided into groups to do a presentation over a chapter in this book. I just felt like there were more valuable ways to come together as a group and produce something."

- "I just wish there would have been a little bit more focus on instructional leadership… it's hard for me to attend higher ed events and instruction isn't even a part of the conversation. I feel like that is the true mission of why we exist."

- "I like the group discussion. I'm very much a person that – okay, I can read it – but to get other insight from your peers and from other professionals, being able to have that dialogue made it more interesting."

- "Go into it with an open mind and taking value in what you're hearing from other professionals.

- I thought the book that we read was a really good book. The context and the content went really well together."

- "Having 10 years of professional experience… some of the activities I didn't connect to as much. It's less about the curriculum and more about… this has the most benefit with individuals within their first one to three years to create some targeted recruitment opportunities to help build people earlier on."

- "We had a book that was really big… really dry… I wouldn't do that again."

- "Just to see the facilities that other campuses have was really helpful and interesting… some of them have writing labs in them… some of them have café areas… some don't."

- "I felt like every keynote speaker every week just told us that they got to be a campus president because the outgoing campus president thought they were a really good guy

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and pulled him up by the bootstrings…. And things don't work like that anymore. None of us are going to get that."

- "Our new Executive Vice President for Advancement in the foundation where I work came from a really small rural college who was also a participant… I was familiar with that college when she transferred not just because I heard of it, but I had actually been at that campus."

- "The conference at the end has a capstone… I thought that the insight that went into doing it was very well thought out and it wasn't a waste of time."

3. What retention or promotional gains have occurred after participating?

Participant	Promotion Since Program (PG1)	Lateral Move Since Program (PG2)	Additional Responsibility Since Program (PG3)	No Change (PG4)
Kim		X	X	
Enrique	X		X	
George		X	X	
Susan		X	X	
Karen		X	X	
Cheryl				X
Keisha			X	X
David		X	X	
Darryl			X	X
Pat			X	X
Jeff	X		X	
Deb	X		X	
Walter			X	X
Total	3 23.1%	5 38.5%	12 92.3%	5 38.5%

Interview quotes to support:
- "I'm still in the same position that I was in when I went through the program."

- "My current position resulted from getting into that program."

- "I don't think I'd be in the job I'm in right now if I hadn't done (the program) because I don't know that I would have felt as comfortable approaching my president."

- "It doesn't pay like a promotion… but in terms of responsibility and amounts of work, it's certainly more."

- "It got me on the radar of our provost… who then went, well, you should go work over here."

- "Unfortunately, it wasn't a promotion… it was a lateral move. What it did do was actually put me in a smaller department with more responsibility."

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- "Almost immediately I got a very nice raise that I probably should have had a long time ago."

- "I would say the growth has been less on title and been more on responsibilities and scope of work."

- "I have gone after two positions. Same result both times where I didn't get the job, but there's a lot of moving parts."

- "Not a promotion, but I have a central role in a major reorganization of the libraries."

- "I love what I do and will retire doing this."

- "I was a manager at the time that I started it… about a year later I was promoted to director."

- "I was a success coach… I'm now an advisor. It was a big jump."

- "I'm president of the faculty association… and yeah that's certainly more responsibility."

4. What are the benefits of the program?

Participant	Get Out of the Office (CB1)	Get Out What You Put into It (CB2)	Build Personal and Organizational Confidence (CB3)	Career Revelation and Self-Discovery (CB4)	Program Helped Define Specific Career Goals (CB5)	Program Helped Guide Toward Career Goals (CB6)	Renewed Commitment to Learning (CB7)	On Short List: Executive Aspirations (CB8)	Network Relationships as Expanded Resources (CB9)	Collaborative Spirit (CB10)	Project Work Contributed to Participating Institution (CB11)	Know What's Expected at Executive Level (CB12)
Kim	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Enrique	X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X
George	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Susan	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Karen	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Cheryl		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Keisha		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
David		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Darryl			X	X	X			X	X	X		X
Pat	X			X		X		X	X	X		
Jeff	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Deb	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Walter		X			X			X	X	X		
Total	8 61.5%	10 76.9%	11 84.6%	11 84.6%	11 84.6%	10 76.9%	7 53.8%	12 92.3%	13 100%	13 100%	9 69.2%	10 76.9%

Interview quotes to support:
- "Talked her (program coordinator) into being a keynote speaker for one of the events… on campus."

- "To see things that don't work… I was appreciative of that as well."

- "The word that comes to mind is energized."

- "It's a confidence thing. Knowing that what I do have to add does add value."

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- "My project for the program was a symposium that is now an annual event that we host for our campus."

- "A lot of driving."

- "An opportunity to connect with great thinkers in this field."

- "Having a much broader network… who know me and have seen me in lots of contexts."

- "It helped me come to the realization that I need to apply for doctoral programs."

- "I want to have a greater impact on my college, wherever I happen to be serving."

- "Being a president is something I still continue to think about. I don't know if I'm ever going to want to do that, but certainly on my mind."

- "The program really helped clarify for me that this is the path I need to be on."

- "When you show an interest in participating the whole year of something like (the program) then you're on the radar even more of getting plugged into other opportunities."

- "It really kind of inspired me to keep going and it helped me also learn how to network even better."

- "Some of the relationships I pulled out of that I think were extraordinary… that have lasted."

- "The relationship just immediately picks up because you had this shared experience."

- "It gave me a different way to kind of search out what I was looking for and what I was interested in."

- "I think that final project is an important piece… presented at one of their conferences or webinars. I think it's a nice way to also continue your participation and to continue to make those connections between cohorts… so there's some continuity there."

- "I really enjoyed being able to get out of the office… back in the day when we could actually travel."

- "It reinforced a lot of behaviors… that was nice to go – I do that! That's a good thing."

- "There's always new techniques and new thoughts in the area… making it a priority."

- "Teaches you to not always pat everybody else on the back but do it for yourself… there's not always someone doing that for you."

- "We were… singularly accredited colleges and we just in June became one. Big state of change… I want to be a part of it, because the reinventing of it is exciting to me."

- "I made some really good friendships out of it… gives you that toolkit and that network and just additional resources."

- "We have collaborated with library services… student services on some projects… and a lot of that came as a result of those relationships that were built."

- "I no longer want to be an administrator… I may be too introverted. I could do that… but I also realized I'm pretty happy being in the classroom."

- "Increased collaboration… I've seen things happen before, but no one I asked knew how to do it… so being persistent to find the right people to be a part of our team."

- "You get out of it what you put into it… and so you can show up and be participating in the discussions once a month, but if you're reaching out and trying to network or develop a bond with those in your group… that's your networking."

- "It helped me kind of think of positions that I don't want to be in. Maybe the former desire to be a campus president… I don't want all of that hanging over me. That responsibility. I want to mix and mingle and interact with the students a little bit more than that."

- "What is it that our presidents or others who may be in that meeting… what is it that they are looking for? Where we can showcase the work that we have done?"

- "The networking. There was an individual that led efforts on her campus for the guided pathways program. I was able to take that information and share to move that forward."

- "The capstone project… I ended up doing mine with a partner and we were able to connect ideas for a project with kind of a common set of values and philosophies that, for me, make the work a lot more meaningful and relevant."

- "It has really made me think about my career goals… and think about values. For example, work-life balance and what that means for me compared to others."

- "It helps people believe that there's more out there. You go to the table and you leave really well nourished, or you don't."

- "It's something that you need to do to have it on your resume… but it's a lot of time. The benefit time ration would not indicate that it's worth doing. It's every Friday for many weeks."

- "I did not come away with practical skills. I was really excited about the day we were supposed to talk about budgeting. The speaker talked about how lucky they were to have such a big budget… the person kept talking about zero based budgeting and she was misusing the term. I went to learn to do my job better… and that's not what I got."

- "It was quite a bit of everybody trying to convince each other how wonderful they were."

- "I realized that there is a club of the people who want to become community college presidents… and they know when the jobs are posted. That those people have certain steps they need to go through… and certainly people they should know. I'm not saying this is a bad thing… that when we talk about community college leadership, that's who and what we're talking about. We're really not talking about the people in community college who get the work done. It was more political."

- "It's a badge… I have some credibility because I've been through the program."

- "I had an advocate that I didn't realize because it was a familiar face from (the program). When I left the room, the person's like, oh yeah… I know him… and kind of vouched for me. I had someone in there who was advocating for something because of a connection that was established."

- "(The program) was to put everybody in a snow globe, shake it up… I really enjoyed that aspect because you're getting a better understanding of the full scope of higher education operations."

- "We'd have really good conversations… healthy conversations that were real. When you're working at your campus, sometimes you're a little afraid to say stuff."

- "Working with that group of people makes you more aware of social issues. It was nice to be able to have… in a professional setting… conversations about how to help these things."

- "I used (the program coordinator) as a reference for my job currently, but I also asked her for a reference for grad school."

- "Your name gets put in the hat more than it does otherwise… it's a very worthwhile program with respect to grooming the next generation of leaders for the institution."

APPENDIX I: CODING SCHEMA

1. How did participation in the cohort-based leadership training program contribute to skill development?

    a. SD1 – Shared Processes and Best Practices

    b. SD2 – Broadened Institutional Leadership Perspective

    c. SD3 – Improved Critical Thinking Strategies

    d. SD4 – Rigor Similar to Graduate Coursework

    e. SD5 – Improved Networking Skills

    f. SD6 – Improved Planning and Resilience Through Change

    g. SD7 – Improved Research and Project Management

    h. SD8 – Recognized Accountability and Decisiveness of Leadership

    i. SD9 – Improved Use of Language in Leadership

2. How did specific program components contribute to participant growth as leaders?

    a. LG1 – Hearing Leadership Perspectives from Presenters

    b. LG2 – Visiting Campus Facilities: Sizes, Structures, and Dynamics

    c. LG3 – Required Reading – Positive Reaction

    d. LG4 – Required Reading – Negative Reaction

    e. LG5 – Diverse Participants and Presenters: College, Career Level, and Background

    f. LG6 – Project Work Beyond Day-to-day Role

    g. LG7 – Presentation of Project at a Conference

    h. LG8 – Emphasis on Administration and Academic Affairs

3. What retention or promotional gains have occurred after participating?

    a. PG1 - Promotion Since Program

    b. PG2 – Lateral Move Since Program

    c. PG3 – Additional Responsibility Since Program

    d. PG4 – No Change

4. What are the benefits of the program?

   a. CB1 – Get Out of the Office

   b. CB2 – Get Out What You Put into It

   c. CB3 – Build Personal and Organizational Confidence

   d. CB4 – Career Revelations and Self-Discovery

   e. CB5 – Program Helped Define Specific Career Goals

   f. CB6 – Program Helped Guide Toward Career Goals

   g. CB7 – Renewed Commitment to Learning

   h. CB8 – On Short List of Those with Executive Aspirations

   i. CB9 – Network Relationships as Expanded Resources

   j. CB10 – Collaborative Spirit

   k. CB11 – Project Work Contributed to Participating Institution

   l. CB12 – Know What's Expected at Executive Level

APPENDIX J: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Date: February 25, 2019

To: Sandra Balkema, Joseph Loobey
From: Gregory Wellman, R.Ph, Ph.D, IRB Chair
Re: IRB Application for Review

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, " *An Examination of Cohort-Based Leadership Development Programs in United States Community Colleges*" and determined that it does not meet the Federal Definition of research on human subjects, as defined by the Department of Health and Human Services or the Food and Drug Administration. This project does not meet the federal definition of research on human subjects because it is a program review activity. As such, approval by the Ferris IRB is not required for the proposed project. Please remove mention of IRB review from recruitment and consent forms.

This determination applies only to the activities described in the submission; it does not apply should changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities are research involving human subjects, submit a new request to the IRB for determination. This letter only applies to Ferris IRB Review; it is your responsibility to ensure all necessary institutional permissions are obtained and policies are met prior to beginning the project, such as documentation of institutional or department support. Note that quality improvement project findings may be published, but any findings presented or published should be clearly identified as part of a quality improvement initiative and not as research.

Your project will remain on file with the Ferris IRB for purposes of tracking research efforts at Ferris. Should you have any questions regarding the determination of this letter, please contact the IRB.

Regards,

Gregory Wellman, R.Ph, Ph.D, IRB Chair
Ferris State University Institutional Review Board